EDELFRIDA,

NOVEL.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

EDELFRIDA.

CHAPTER XX.

EDELFRIDA now plunged at once into the diſſipation from which ſhe expected relief to the ſerious grievances of her ſituation, and the internal inquietude which preyed on her mind: reſolute not to diſcover what paſſed within her boſom, ſhe aſſumed that gay and careleſs air which is frequently miſtaken for an indication of happineſs; and to Maria alone ſhe confeſſed that ſhe was miſerable. She omitted no opportunity of going into public; and when there, her eye inſenſibly ſought after an object it never found; while common obſervers imagined it was the admiration ſhe ſeldom failed to inſpire;

and that her attentive ſurvey of the figures around her, proceeded from a deſire of attracting their notice. Indeed they were juſtified in that opinion; for though the abſent and unfaithful Henry was the only object about which ſhe felt any anxiety, yet if any one of thoſe flattering coxcombs who generally followed her wherever ſhe appeared, drew near her even while her thoughts were moſt intently fixed on her own unhappineſs, ſhe inſtantly recalled them to the ſcene before her, and flirted with all the airs of a coquette, apparently delighted with the attention of the men ſhe heartily deſpiſed. By degrees, her dreſs became highly fantaſtical; and, in ſhort, ſhe was, to all outward obſervation, a *toniſh* Miſs. The rational part of her acquaintance ſaw and condemned the change. Lady Dudley, who had all along ſought opportunities of mortifying her, conſtantly threw out hints of her levity, her extravagance, and her vanity;

vanity; inveighed againſt the life ſhe led in the bittereſt terms, but never condeſcended to adviſe or direct her: and Edelfrida, who had the ſpirit of oppoſition in her, purſued with greater avidity a plan which ſeemed to create the diſpleaſure of one for whom ſhe had the moſt unconquerable diſlike. Sir Edward, mean while, appeared not to obſerve her conduct, but ſuffered her to go on in her own way; hoping, perhaps, that ſhe would diſpoſe of herſelf ſo as to relieve him from any further trouble about her. His nature was not ſufficiently warm or animated, to make him feel a generous intereſt in her real welfare: he found that her reſidence in his family created continual diſagreements; he therefore determined ſhe ſhould make uſe of the opportunity her ſituation in town, together with her beauty, afforded her, to ſecure an eſtabliſhment for herſelf. With no guide, then, but her friend Maria, who was

too partial to find any faults in her, ſhe was thrown into the world to act wholly for herſelf; and her diſpoſition was ill calculated for the purpoſe of leading her uncenſured through life; and, united to her extreme youth and uncommon ſhare of beauty, ſhe was certain, by becoming to many an object of envy, to be to more an object for ſlander: and indeed ſhe did not eſcape; for Lady Wilford and Miſs Wilford, who, except occaſional ſallies of ill-humour, which Edelfrida retorted upon them, behaved to her with the freedom of intimacy, inviting her to be of all their parties, and ſometimes pretending to take an intereſt in her affairs to her face, yet never omitted an occaſion to impreſs other people with unfavourable ideas of her character and diſpoſition, by lamenting her errors with apparent candour, but real malice; by repeating things to her diſadvantage, in the accent of friendſhip, and thus inſidiouſly wounding

ing her reputation, under the maſk of kindneſs for her welfare, and concern that ſhe ſhould lay herſelf open to the reproach of meriting the ſcandal circulated at her expence. In this career of folly which ſhe too careleſsly ran, regardleſs of the conſequences, becauſe hopeleſs of the only felicity ſhe was capable of enjoying, Edelfrida ſaw the days and weeks paſs on in a conſtant round of what was called pleaſure, but what was to her a tranſient reſource only againſt actual deſpair. She had now ceaſed to hope Mr. Henry Evelyne would ever think of her more; and indeed her pride forbade her to recollect him but with ſcorn, though her heart, revolting againſt its haughty dictates, pined in ſecret over his cruel deſertion.

At an aſſembly, to which ſhe had accompanied Maria and Lady Dudley, ſhe had been introduced to Mrs. Conway, the lady to whom Miſs Wilford

had ſpoken of her at the opera in terms of no great reſpect:—this lady, ſhe found, was ſiſter to Mr. Dormer; and in converſation with her ſhe learnt, that ſome unexpected buſineſs had carried him out of town, which accounted for her not meeting him at any of the places ſhe had frequented, ſince the firſt evening of their acquaintance. Mrs. Conway appeared to Edelfrida deſerving of the prepoſſeſſion ſhe felt for her:—her manners were polite and engaging; and thoſe who knew her intimately, ſpoke of her in the higheſt terms of praiſe; beſides, ſhe ſeemed to ſeek occaſions of converſing with Edelfrida; and there was a kind complacency in her behaviour towards her, which ſhe ſeldom or ever met with, and which inſtantly penetrated her heart. Whenever they were in the ſame company, Mrs. Conway and Edelfrida inſenſibly drew near to each other, and inſenſibly became intimate. Theſe were the moments

when Edelfrida appeared to moſt advantage: diveſted of all her aſſumed gaiety, and the natural levity of her temper baniſhed by more worthy feelings, ſhe talked like a rational creature on rational ſubjects, and exhibited all the ſterling qualities ſhe poſſeſſed; and thus, amidſt almoſt general cenſure, ſhe ſecured one ſteady and valuable friend. Mrs. Conway frequently lamented to her, her brother's abſence; and Edelfrida herſelf, taken by the ſingularity of his manners, wiſhed his return. Amongſt ſeveral other engagements which Edelfrida had, in common with Miſs Dudley, was one to a private ball, where ſhe was agreeably ſurpriſed by the appearance of Mr. Dormer, who almoſt inſtantly came up to her, and ſaid, "As "I can, if neceſſary, produce a fair "plea for my abſence, I am authoriſed "by our mutual agreement, which I "have not forgotten if you have, to "enquire into your life and actions

" ſince we parted."—" To anſwer that " enquiry," replied Edelfrida, " would " be to do myſelf no great credit in " your opinion, I fear; ſilence is there- " fore my only refuge."—" I don't " admit your right to be ſilent," re- turned he; " remember, you conſti- " tuted me your Mentor; but as I have " not the gift of ſeeing what is going " forward in London whilſt I am abſent " from it, I expect that you give me " the information I ſtand in need of." " My reluctance to do ſo," ſaid ſhe, " ſhould convince you that I have " nothing pleaſant to impart: indeed, " I know not of any thing which has " occurred, likely to afford you any " entertainment or ſatisfaction. You " ſhould not have deſerted your poſt," added ſhe; " you would then have had " no occaſion to demand from me an " humiliating confeſſion of errors which " I muſt bluſh to recapitulate."—— " And yet," ſaid he, " you did not

" bluſh

" bluſh to commit them."—" True," replied ſhe, " I did not; but reflection " places them in a different point of " view, to that which they appeared in " on the moment of commiſſion."—" But reflection has failed," returned he, " to make the neceſſary reformation, " has it not?"—" In the inſtant of " action, and that of reflection," ſhe replied, " I am ever influenced by dif- " ferent ideas of the ſame thing; the " energy of one moment deſtroys the " reaſon of the other: but I am ſure," ſhe continued, " that you do not expect " ſtability or conſiſtency from ſuch a " creature as I am."—" I find," ſaid he, " the expectation had been vain, by " your own account: but to tell you " the truth, I foreſaw, the firſt moment " I beheld you, that you would run " into error, and awaken cenſure, by " the very means other people avoid it. " Your countenance informed me, that " the ſpirit which animates your frame

" was not of that negative kind, to
" follow the dull level of propriety;
" and beholding you on the brink of a
" precipice, I was impelled to hold out
" a friendly hand to ſave you. My
" abſence was ſo far unlucky; for, on
" my return, I find you have actually
" ſtrayed into the path which I would
" have warned you againſt."—" I thank
" you for the friendly intention," replied
ſhe; " but I believe I ſhould ſcarcely
" have profited by it; being perhaps
" too little anxious about the world's
" opinion or eſteem." This ſpeech was
uttered with an involuntary ſigh.——
" There muſt be ſome hidden cauſe,"
returned he, looking ſteadily at her,
" for this diſregard of the world's opi-
" nion and eſteem. It is not natural
" that one juſt entering into life ſhould
" ſet at nought what muſt unavoidably
" make part at leaſt of her happineſs
" or miſery."—" You forget," ſaid ſhe,
recovering her wonted appearance of
cheerful-

cheerfulneſs, " that I am too inſignifi-
" cant to excite envy, conſequently no
" ſubject for the world: may I not
" therefore hope, with all my faults on
" my head, to paſs unregarded by the
" multitude, and ſteal away into the
" obſcurity for which it is pretty cer-
" tain I am deſigned, without its ever
" being remarked that I am no more?"
" You are miſtaken," replied he, " if
" you imagine that inſignificancy is a
" ſhield againſt ſlander; beware then
" how you proceed, on that principle,
" to diſregard the monſter. Truſt me,
" there is no retreat ſo obſcure which
" can preſerve you from its graſp; and
" if I do not greatly err, you, of all
" the women I know, will find it moſt
" difficult to ſooth your mind into in-
" difference, whether the fame you leave
" behind you is fair or diſgraceful.
" It ſeems that, in my abſence, my ſiſter
" has taken it into her head to ſuppoſe
" ſhe has diſcovered qualities in you,

" which, believe me, the world will
" give you little credit, if you do not
" inſtantly diſcard your affected follies.
" But Mrs. Conway, not wholly go-
" verned by popular opinion, thinking
" fit to judge for herſelf, has, ſhe tells
" me, conceived a ſort of ſentiment for
" you, which borders on regard. If
" you think it worth your while to
" cultivate this infant friendſhip, I be-
" lieve I may confidently aſſert, that
" you will never repent it."—" Mrs.
" Conway's favourable opinion does me
" honour, returned Edelfrida; " and it
" would give me pleaſure too if I could
" ever flatter myſelf with deſerving it:
" as it is, I am at leaſt too honeſt to
" accept a friendſhip founded on the
" qualities I am ſuppoſed to, but do
" not in reality poſſeſs."——" I find
" then," ſaid he, " that I am to under-
" ſtand, you have not the reſolution to
" abandon a ſyſtem, deſtructive to your
" future tranquillity as much as it is
" ruinous

" ruinous to your preſent reſpectability
" in life. If that is the caſe, I here
" withdraw myſelf from the monitorial
" office you aſſigned me; ſince it were
" vain to combat with an enemy ſo
" ſtrong and ſo determined."—" Nay,
" I entreat," cried ſhe gaily, " that you
" will not ſo haſtily give me up as in-
" corrigible: a few more lectures from
" you, mixed with a little of Mrs.
" Conway's ſweetly-reproving gentle-
" neſs, may work a reformation even
" in me."—" 'Tis worth a trial at
" leaſt," ſaid he; " and not to fatigue
" my pupil with too much inſtruction
" and reproof, I'll try for once to lay
" aſide the Mentor, and become a man
" of the world. I ſee I have held you
" in converſation till the beaux have
" diſpoſed of themſelves for the dances
" which are about to begin; ſo if you
" can fancy me a Mr. Martin, or any
" other Mr. you would chooſe to honour
" with your fair hand, I am at your
" ſervice."

" ſervice."—" Come along then," replied Edelfrida; " I ſhall have ſome " credit in transforming you into the " likeneſs of the gay and gallant Mr. " Martin." They then joined the dancers; and both appeared, for the time, to forget a ſerious word had paſſed between them: for ſerious the converſation had really been, though they had each endeavoured to give it an air of raillery.

In the courſe of the dancing, Miſs Wilford came up to them, and, with a ſarcaſtic ſmile, obſerved the amazing power of Miſs Edelfrida Dudley's charms. " I never ſaw Mr. Dormer " guilty of ſuch diſſipation before," added ſhe; " you may pique yourſelf " indeed, Ma'am, on having conquered " the moſt profound ſolemnity; for I " proteſt I ſaw him ſmile within theſe " five minutes: it is really quite a " phænomenon to ſee Mr. Dormer ſo

" very

" very ſprightly."—" I told Mr. Dor-
" mer," replied Edelfrida, " that I
" ſhould derive great credit from the
" metamorphoſe you behold; and I was
" certain none would be more ready to
" beſtow it than Miſs Wilford," con-
tinued ſhe, ending her ſpeech with a
curtſy to that lady. " What is there,"
ſaid Dormer, bowing with affected gal-
lantry to Edelfrida, " from which you
" do not derive credit? and what is it
" that the power of your charms cannot
" achieve, ſave the very difficult taſk
" of ſilencing the tongue of an envious
" woman?" Miſs Wilford, who could
not but perceive that this ſatire was
levelled at her, as well from the manner
which accompanied it, as from her own
conſciouſneſs of deſerving it, coloured,
and walked away to the bottom of the
ſet. " She felt the ſting," ſaid Dormer;
" but, alas! nature will prevail in her;
" and while ſhe lives, her greateſt joy
" will be to defame the excellence ſhe
" knows

" knows herſelf deſtitute of."—" There
" are ſo few," replied Edelfrida, " but
" what can boaſt of more agreeable
" qualities of mind, and ſuperior en-
" dowments of perſon, that Miſs Wil-
" ford muſt be at war with the whole
" world, if ſhe will not tolerate that
" which excels her."—" She would be
" as much too inſignificant for cenſure,
" as ſhe is worthleſs of praiſe," returned
Dormer, " if her talent for miſchief did
" not give her ſome conſequence."—
" You can't blame her then," ſaid
Edelfrida, laughing, " for being miſ-
" chievous, if by that means only the
" ſpace ſhe fills in the creation is to be
" marked."—" Oh! for a law," ex-
elaimed he, " to baniſh ſuch envenomed
" reptiles from the ſociety whoſe peace
" they have power to diſturb, without
" poſſeſſing one virtue to make amends
" for the treſpaſs!"—" I fear," ſaid ſhe,
" the crowded aſſemblies we now every
" night ſee, in this great metropolis,

" would

" would become very thin, if ſuch a
" law could be put in execution."—
" So much the better," replied he;
" the few left would have ſome chance
" of enjoying a rational intercourſe with
" each other, unmoleſted by envy,
" malice, and uncharitableneſs: the ties
" of friendſhip would remain unbroken,
" and the hearts which now ſecretly
" bleed over ſome heavy calamity, would
" be ſoothed by kindneſs, gratified by
" a juſt and honourable reſentment; or,
" perhaps, the wound might be bound
" up for ever, by mutual explanations
" of parties divided by the foul tongue
" of ſlander, and the evil inſinuations
" of a ſecret foe, proceeding from the
" helliſh diſpoſitions of a Miſs Wil-
" ford."

Edelfrida could not help breathing a ſecret wiſh, that ſome happy accident might explain the cauſe of M. Henry Evelyne's behaviour, to her ſatisfaction, though

though it was impoſſible for her to gueſs who had any intereſt in dividing them: ſhe rather dreaded to diſcover that he had abandoned her of himſelf, either from a fickleneſs of mind, or from a reflection on ſome part of her character which diſpleaſed him; yet, when Mr. Dormer talked of mutual explanations and divided parties, her own unhappy ſituation recurred with added force to her recollection, and ſhe ſaid to herſelf, "What explanations can unite me to the only man "I can ever feel a real affection for?"—Dormer remarked her abſence of mind; but having too much feeling for what he conceived to be unaffected grief of heart, he changed the ſubject to a leſs ſerious one, without mentioning his ſuſpicion that ſome ſecret ſorrow lurked in his fair partner's boſom; and when the dancing ſet ended, he was obliged to reſign her hand to Mr. Martin, who had engaged her for the following cotillon, Martin had actually followed Edelfrida

ever

ever ſince her firſt arrival in town, with no other idea than that of offering her his hand and fortune, which his vanity gave him little reaſon to ſuppoſe would be finally rejected by a girl whoſe ſituation he knew was uncomfortable, and whoſe fortune was ſo very ſmall. Mr. Dudley's abſence had removed the only rival he had to dread; for, though univerſally admired, Edelfrida had diſcovered that her want of money was an objection to any ſerious connexion with her, which very few could get over. Martin had alſo remarked that the men who moſt praiſed her beauty, and ſought her attention, were mere danglers: he therefore purſued his ſcheme: though frequently mortified by her neglect, ſtill he reſolved on vanquiſhing her indifference; and he had ſometimes reaſon to congratulate himſelf on victory, ſince ſhe was by no means ſteady or conſiſtent in her conduct towards him. Notwithſtanding her mind never varied from

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the reſolution ſhe had formed, never to become his wife, he was encouraged by Sir Edward and Lady Dudley, warmly eſpouſed by Lady Wilford, and urged by his increaſing paſſion, to call the beauteous Edelfrida his. He now then thought he had paid her attention enough to juſtify his applying to her uncle for his conſent to this union; and, leſt ſhe ſhould keep him in ſuſpenſe from any capricious humour, he determined to mention the ſubject firſt to Sir Edward, and obtain his intereſt, with which he thought Edelfrida would not venture to trifle: with this ſcheme in his head, he was unuſually troubleſome in his aſſiduities, which vexed and fatigued her ſo much, that ſhe was not ſorry when the evening concluded; as ſhe found it impoſſible to eſcape him, or put his good-humour to flight, though ſhe treated him with the moſt careleſs neglect; and the idea of the too well beloved Henry had ſaddened her heart, and ſunk her ſpirits too

too low, for any contention with him. Ere ſhe left the room, Mrs. Conway, with whom ſhe had before talked, came up to her, and deſired ſhe would ſpend the next day with her *en famille*. Edelfrida accepted the invitation: then being joined by Maria and Mandeville, they proceeded to the coach.

When they got home, they repeated to each other what had paſſed in the courſe of the evening, as was their conſtant cuſtom; then retired to reſt. Mandeville was always the ſubject of Maria's ſtory; Henry Evelyne, always the ſubject of Edelfrida's thoughts.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE next day, Edelfrida kept her engagement with Mrs. Conway: ſhe left St. James's Square, without ſeeing Lady Dudley, which ſhe conſidered as an eſcape from one of the moſt unpleaſant circumſtances of her life; and found her new friends ready to receive her with every mark of pleaſure and good humour, which ſhe ſeldom experienced at home, or at Lady Wilford's. In this ſociety ſhe might have ſpent many hours very happily, had not her heart received a wound whoſe ſmart ſhe felt moſt acutely, when in thoſe tranquil ſcenes which preſented to her a picture of the felicity ſhe had once a proſpect of taſting. She found both Mrs. Conway and Mr. Dormer were very muſical; and after dinner ſhe exerted herſelf to give

give them a ſpecimen of her abilities. She picked out thoſe ſoft and melancholy airs which ſooth while they feed the mind's diſeaſe; and as her feelings juſt then were in uniſon with the muſic, ſhe excelled even herſelf. Dormer liſtened, with a countenance expreſſive of ſtrong emotions; with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on Edelfrida, he ſtood immovable, chained to the ſpot. Mrs. Conway regarded him with a ſoft and tender air of compaſſion. At length he exclaimed, "Good God! is it then "poſſible that a creature ſo formed, ſo "reſembling the angelic, ſhould fall "the ſacrifice of Hell's malignant "paſſions, implanted in the heart of a "villain!" Edelfrida looked amazed and terrified: he caught her eye, and recollected himſelf. Mrs. Conway appeared greatly moved. "I beg your "pardon," ſaid he to Edelfrida; "I was "ſurpriſed into the ſudden, and, to you, "unintelligible exclamation. I am ſorry

"I inter-

"I interrupted you," he added, with a forced ſmile; "yet if you will favour "us by playing again, I muſt petition "for a more enlivening ſtrain." Edelfrida, with the words he had uttered ſtill vibrating on her ear, could ſcarcely recover the ſurpriſe they had thrown her into. She knew not that they could poſſibly allude to her; yet ſhe trembled leſt they ſhould. Dormer, however, ſeemed not inclined to enter into any explanation; ſhe therefore again ſat down to the inſtrument, from which ſhe had haſtily riſen, and ſelected, as he had requeſted, ſome muſic of a more animating compoſition. They could none of them recover their wonted appearance of cheerfulneſs, notwithſtanding the efforts they all made. Mrs. Conway, though ſhe made no obſervations on what had happened, yet looked ſhocked and diſtreſſed for the reſt of the evening. Dormer was thoughtful, and Edelfrida perplexed. When the carriage came

for

for her, and ſhe roſe to depart, Dormer, taking her hand to lead her down ſtairs, ſaid, "I hope I have not ſo entirely "alarmed you this evening, as to de- "prive my ſiſter of your ſociety in "future: perhaps ſome day, when I "can gain reſolution, I may explain "the preſent myſtery. Be aſſured, in "the mean time, that what I ſaid in- "voluntarily, has no alluſion to any "perſon or event of which you have "the leaſt knowledge."—"Miſs Dud- "ley," continued Mrs. Conway, with- out giving Edelfrida time to reply, "may be perfectly ſatisfied of that: "I myſelf can vouch for the truth of "it."—"I have no reaſon to doubt "the word of either," returned Edel- frida, with a ſmile; "I am perfectly "ſatisfied—and to convince you of it, "my dear Ma'am, I ſhall very ſoon "again profit by your indulgence, and "make myſelf one of your party."— "You can't do me a greater favour,"

replied Mrs. Conway. They then wiſhed each other good night; and Edelfrida, accompanied by Dormer, proceeded to the carriage. As they went down ſtairs, he ſaid to her, "I fear you will think "the wild ſally I was guilty of this "evening, has diſqualified me for a "monitor, by proving a derangement "of intellect; and indeed I ſometimes "think recollection will diſorder my "ſenſes. Oh, my fair friend, I could "a tale unfold, of ſuch a nature, that "the hardeſt heart would melt in ſym-"pathy. But why ſhould I harrow up "feelings already perhaps too keen? "why purchaſe your pity, at the ex-"pence of your tranquillity? For, "granting that the impreſſion could "not laſt, the few hours allotted to "happineſs ſhould not be trifled with. "Be careful of them, then; and never, "never may a real affliction wound "your gentle boſom!" Edelfrida ſighed, and he handed her into the coach, which

inſtantly

inſtantly drove off; and ſhe was ſet down at her uncle's door, ere ſhe had time to recover herſelf from the emotions Dormer's words had created. She arrived at home juſt before ſupper, and found no company. Sir Edward and my Lady were playing at cards; Maria ſitting penſively at work: but on all their countenances there appeared a gloom, either of ſorrow or of anger, the cauſe of which ſhe could not divine. When the game was ended, Sir Edward walked out of the room in ſilence; and Lady Dudley, addreſſing herſelf to Edelfrida, ſaid, "I hope, Ma'am, you have "ſpent a pleaſant day with your new "friends."—"Very much ſo, Ma'am," replied Edelfrida mildly. "A fortunate "circumſtance for you," reſumed her Ladyſhip; "you, Ma'am, can always be "relieved from the dulneſs of a family-"party at home; which indeed, if we "may judge from the frequency of your "abſence, you have no partiality for.

" 'Tis a pity you could not have taken " your amiable and dutiful friend Maria " with you; ſhe would then, for a while " at leaſt, have eſcaped from the unjuſt " and heart-breaking determination of " her cruel father and mother." Edelfrida found there was a ſtorm approaching; but from what quarter it proceeded, ſhe could not gueſs: to find Maria involved in it, gave her pain, however.— Supper put a ſtop to all further converſation; as, whilſt the ſervants were preſent, her Ladyſhip did not vent her ill-nature ſo pointedly; and when they withdrew, a ſullen kind of ſilence reigned for ſome time. At length, Lady Dudley broke it, by obſerving to Sir Edward, how gracefully Maria received the admonitions intended to preſerve her from ruin: " The young ladies," added ſhe, " are excellent company to-night. Pray, " Ma'am," turning fiercely to Edelfrida, " what is the matter with you? The " prudence of your choice has not yet

" been

" been called in queſtion, however the " propriety of your conduct may have " been arraigned: to that, however, you " ſeem tolerably indifferent."—" As I " have created your Ladyſhip's diſplea- " ſure, though unconſcious of the cauſe," replied Edelfrida, " I thought beſt to " be ſilent; if that offends, I muſt beg " leave to retire, ſince nothing I could " ſay would be acceptable." Saying this, ſhe took a candle from the ſide-board, and, wiſhing them good night, left the room, waiting in her own till Maria ſhould be releaſed, to gratify her impatient curioſity, and quiet her appre-henſions on her friend's account. At length ſhe came.

CHAPTER XXII.

AS ſoon as Edelfrida and Maria were alone, the former eagerly enquired into the cauſe of Lady Dudley's diſpleaſure, and the latter ſorrowfully anſwered the enquiry: "You may recollect," ſaid ſhe, "the firſt time we had any converſation on the ſubject of my attachment to Mandeville, I expreſſed my fears that Lady Wilford was only laying a ſnare for me, by appearing to encourage us both in what I may now too juſtly term an unfortunate partiality; ſince my father, inſtigated by my mother, has abſolutely forbidden me ever to think more of the man on whom I have beſtowed my affections beyond recall, and who would juſtly accuſe me of perfidy, ſhould I ever conſent to marry another, which, heaven

heaven knows, I never mean to do. When you were gone to Mrs. Conway's, I was ſummoned into my mother's dreſſing-room, where ſat my father. There was a ſolemnity in his aſpect which made me tremble for what was to follow; and on my mother's countenance ſat an expreſſion I could not miſtake, and which augmented my apprehenſion. "I ſent for you, Maria," ſaid my father, "to acquaint you that "I am no ſtranger to the encourage-"ment you have given to a young "man of the name of Mandeville, "who is, I underſtand, in the Guards." At this addreſs my heart beat violently, and I felt my cheeks glow; but I replied not. My mother obſerved my confuſion, and exclaimed, "She has "not the effrontery to deny the charge; "that guilty bluſh avows the truth of "it." Still I was ſilent; for my ſpirits were in too great an agitation to ſuffer me to ſpeak with calmneſs, or

indeed to ſpeak at all. My father then proceeded: "I am ſorry, Maria, "you have ſo far forgotten your duty, "as to make it neceſſary for me to in- "terpoſe my authority between you "and your improper choice. Mr. Man- "deville may be a gentleman, and a "man of character, for ought I know "to the contrary; but he is a connec- "tion I can never approve for my "daughter. I therefore command you, "without heſitation, to think no more "of him. You have betrayed the "confidence I placed in you; you "have, therefore, no right to be ſur- "priſed that I forbid your leaving this "houſe, except under the guardianſhip "of your mother or ſiſter. Your morn- "ing excurſions with your giddy couſin, "I prohibit; and when you go out "in an evening, Lady Dudley or Lady "Wilford muſt be anſwerable for your "conduct." Irritated by my ſiſter's treachery, I could not help ſaying, "I

"preſume,

" preſume, Sir, I am indebted to Lady " Wilford for this report of my actions; " that being the caſe, you will, I hope, " excuſe me, if I ceaſe to regard her " in future as a ſiſter, and decline every " intercourſe with her. Be aſſured, " however, Sir, that it was never my " intention to marry Captain Mande- " ville, or any other man, without " your conſent; and I had flattered " myſelf, that, when he came to be " known fully to you, you would " have found his want of a large for- " tune the only objection to an alliance " with him; and that that objection, " in conſideration of his many good " qualities, and my happineſs, might " have been done away, as I am not " ambitious of living in the ſtyle of " life Lady Wilford has choſen." I uttered not this without much emotion; and I thought I ſaw my father ſoften. A look, however, from my mother, put his riſing tenderneſs to flight, and he

replied, " You have heard my reſolu-
" tion: if you think proper to be guided
" by it, well; if not, you are to conſider
" yourſelf no longer my daughter, nor
" are you ever to expect from me the
" affection or remembrance of a father.
" Lady Dudley," continued he, turn-
ing to my mother, " I recommend
" it to you to reaſon your daughter
" into her duty once more; for which
" purpoſe I leave you together." Then,
as if glad to make his eſcape, he walked
out of the room. I was in no ſpirits or
humour, you may believe, to endure
my mother's mode of reaſoning with
patience or compoſure; but, as I could
not fly from her power, I quietly ſeated
myſelf, in expectation of a torrent of
accuſation and invective, in the place
of reaſon; nor was I miſtaken. She
began by charging me with ingratitude
to a ſiſter who ſought to preſerve me
from ruin; a ſiſter who was an honour
to her family in all reſpects, and who

merited

merited my warmeſt thanks for the friendly part ſhe had taken in my affairs. "Pardon me, Ma'am," ſaid I, with with ſome ſpirit, "Lady Wilford has "taken a moſt unfriendly and perfidious "part in my affairs: ſhe firſt encou- "raged me to like Mr. Mandeville, "by throwing us in each other's way "whenever ſhe had an opportunity; "ſhe now makes a merit with you and "my father, of affecting to diſapprove "the connexion, and by unhandſomely "betraying me." "She has done her "duty," returned my mother in an angry tone; and darting on me a look of fierce diſpleaſure, "How dare you tell "me that ſhe ever encouraged you to "like a man ſhe knew neither Sir Ed- "ward nor I ſhould approve? I'll an- "ſwer for its being a falſehood, who- "ever aſſerts it; and as to her betray- "ing you, ſhe could not have done "otherwiſe, without making herſelf ac- "countable for your ruin. Your couſin,

" I ſuppoſe, your boſom friend and " counſellor, would have acted dif- " ferently; and to be ſure, ſo prudent " a lady is an excellent example to " to copy." Now, my dear Edelfrida, though I was convinced I was neither ſerving you nor myſelf by the reply, I could not for my life help ſaying, " that " I was certain you would ſcorn to be- " tray your friend, and act a double " part, on any occaſion." " I hope," replied Edelfrida, " that you only did " me juſtice, Maria; but I am ſorry " you ſaid ſo to your mother; for I " dare ſay it only drew upon you her " further diſpleaſure." " I muſt con- " feſs it did," ſaid Maria, " but it " was my own fault. I will never, " however, hear you injured, without " trying to redreſs you." " I wiſh," returned Edelfrida with enthuſiaſm, " that it may ever be in my power to " repay your goodneſs to me. But tell " me, Maria, what you mean to do in

" this

" this emergency. " Why," replied Maria, ſighing, " I mean to keep my " faith inviolate with Mandeville, if " he is content to wait for happier " proſpects; for I can never bring " myſelf to forfeit the affection of my " father, who would be kind and " indulgent to us both, my friend, if " my mother would let him. I reſolve, " then, againſt marrying Mandeville, " till I can obtain my father's conſent; " and, if I can never obtain it, I will " live and die ſingle. I ſhould tell you " that, in addition to the mortifying " injunction I am under, not to go out, " except with my mother or ſiſter, I " am alſo forbidden to write to Mande- " ville, except I would write ſuch a " letter as they would approve, and he " would execrate me for; which no " power on earth ſhall compel me " to do." " Is Mandeville, then," ſaid Edelfrida, with quickneſs, " to " receive his final diſmiſſion from my " uncle,

" uncle, and not a line from you to " ſoften the decree, Maria?" " There," returned Maria, " I muſt depend on " your friendſhip, Edelfrida, to aſſiſt " me." " Command me," cried Edel- " frida with energy; " be the taſk " difficult or dangerous, I will attempt " it." " I hope it is neither," ſaid Miſs Dudley, half-ſmiling through her tears; " will you write a note " to Mandeville, deſiring him to meet " you at any place, where you can ex- " plain the whole affair to him, which " cannot be ſo well done by letter, you " know. The weather is now fine; " ſuppoſe you fix on Kenſington Gar- " dens; they are not yet much fre- " quented; and there, I think, you " may, unobſerved, relate to him all " my anxieties and griefs, and tell him " my determination. You muſt alſo " learn from him his ſentiments on the " ſubject, and bring me word whether " he has conſtancy and patience enough

" to

" to wait the event, having no inter-
" courſe with me, except through you,
" our mutual friend." Edelfrida liſtened attentively to theſe inſtructions, and promiſed to be directed by them, in her conference with Mandeville, which ſhe would immediately ſeek, by writing a note to him, to make the appointment, as Maria had deſired her. But how this note was to be conveyed to his lodgings was next to be conſidered; as, no doubt, the ſervants would receive orders to the contrary, and it was not prudent to truſt to them. It was agreed, then, that Edelfrida ſhould pretend ſome buſineſs at the millener's; to whoſe houſe ſhe would, as uſual, be attended by one of the footmen; that, while ſhe was at Mrs. ——, ſhe ſhould ſend him with a meſſage to her mantua-maker, who lived at the diſtance of three or four ſtreets. Having thus diſpoſed of him, ſhe was to recollect having a letter, which required

quired to be inſtantly delivered, and get Mrs. —— the millener's porter to carry it to Bond-ſtreet, before her ſervant returned. This ſcheme planned, it only remained for Edelfrida to put it into execution, which ſhe promiſed her friend Maria to exert all her ſkill to do. The two friends ſat up above half the night, talking over their griefs; and when they ſeparated, it was to indulge reflections on the ſame ſubject, for neither could cloſe their eyes. Had Edelfrida been at eaſe on her own account, which was far from being the caſe, yet her generous ſympathy in the fate of Maria would have deſtroyed her repoſe.

CHAP.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE next morning Lady Dudley, always ſuſpicious, would not let Maria and Edelfrida remain together; and knowing that Sir Edward retired to his own room immediately after taking his breakfaſt, ſhe ſent for her daughter into her apartment. Maria leſs reluctantly obeyed the order, as Edelfrida might then purſue their ſcheme without its appearing that ſhe was concerned in her going out.

At an earlier hour than uſual, then, Edelfrida ſallied forth to the milliner's, where ſhe created ſome want of a cap or handkerchief, to ſave appearances. She gave the footman directions to go to the mantua-maker's, with a meſſage as agreed; and then affected with great ſucceſs to have

have recollected the letter. Mrs. ——, remarking her diſtreſs how to ſend to Bond-ſtreet, offered to accommodate her with a meſſenger; which offer being accepted, and the letter being put into the porter's hand by Edelfrida herſelf, it ſeemed in a fair way of reaching the place of its deſtination. So far ſhe had ſucceeded to her wiſh; and her ſervant returning, ſhe ſet forward home again, as nothing more could be done till ſhe had received Captain Mandeville's reply; and as notes and letters frequently came to her from different people, there was nothing to be apprehended in his ſending his anſwer to Sir Edward's, which he did, ere Edelfrida had had an opportunity of communicating to Maria how ſhe had proceeded in the firſt part of the enterpriſe; for ſhe was ſtill ſhut up in her mother's dreſſing-room, where her ambaſſador did not chooſe to ſeek her. Mandeville's note contained a thouſand thanks to her for her friendly

interpoſition.

interpoſition between him and deſpair, with a thouſand aſſurances to Maria of his eternal fidelity: he concluded with conjuring Edelfrida to be true to the moment of her appointment, as ſhe wiſhed to relieve him from the moſt cruel ſtate of anxiety, in any degree; wholly to do ſo, he feared was not in her power, unleſs ſhe could prevail on her friend to promiſe him a more ſpeedy hope of happineſs than he could foreſee from the ever-doubtful concurrence of her family.

With this note Edelfrida waited impatiently for Maria's releaſe, which was not however much before dinner: ſhe then put it into her hand, the contents making all other information unneceſſary. Maria ſhed tears on peruſing it; and embracing Edelfrida, ſhe poured forth the effuſions of a grateful and tender heart on her boſom. The hour of appointment was twelve o'clock the following

lowing morning, when Edelfrida was to ſay ſhe had promiſed to take a walk with Mrs. Conway, and to call upon her for that purpoſe. At Mrs. Conway's door ſhe was to diſmiſs her footman, and, having paid a ſhort viſit to that lady, entruſt her with the whole affair, and borrow a ſervant to attend her to the door of Kenſington Gardens. "By making "Mrs. Convay acquainted with our "ſcheme," ſaid Maria, "you ſecure "yourſelf from a wrong interpretation "of your actions, ſhould any perſon "obſerve them; and as I know Man-"deville is particularly intimate with "Mr. Dormer, I have no ſcruple of "confiding in them, in order to ſecure "my amiable and generous friend from "any diſagreeable conſequences which "might enſue from his kindneſs to me. "The little artifice we are obliged to "make uſe of, I pretend not to defend, "only lament that it is neceſſary." "'Tis "an artifice," replied Edelfrida, "inno-

"cent

" cent of any intended injury to any " mortal, and may therefore, I truſt, in " the preſent exigency, be pardoned, " though not defended." The reſt of the day was ſpent at home; and heavily it paſſed off. Sir Edward was grave, Lady Dudley out of humour, and Maria wearied with lectures on a ſubject painful enough in itſelf, without the additional vexation of hearing herſelf ſeverely condemned with unmitigated rigour. Edelfrida, as uſual, experienced the effects of her Ladyſhip's diſlike frequently in the courſe of the day. When the welcome hour of retiring arrived, Maria, all anxiety about the reſult of Edelfrida's conference with Mandeville, followed her into her room, to repeat the inſtructions ſhe had before given her. " A little ſpace now only intervenes," ſaid ſhe, " between me and the final de- " termination of my fate."—" I could " almoſt venture to pronounce it, before " I ſee Mandeville," replied Edelfrida.

" I am

"I am greatly miſtaken in him, if he "is to be tempted by any circumſtance "in life to relinquiſh you, ſave your "conſenting to relinquiſh him, which "I may aſſure him you have no thoughts "of."—"Indeed you may," returned Maria mournfully; "for though we are "deſtined perhaps never to meet on "happier terms, yet will I hold my "faith to him ſacred and inviolate "through life."

After Edelfrida had done, and ſaid all ſhe could think of, to quiet the mind of her friend, they parted for the night. The next morning was luckily a very fine one; ſo that Edelfrida had a fair pretence for putting her walking ſcheme into execution. She careleſsly mentioned her deſign of calling upon Mrs. Conway to Maria at breakfaſt; who, with apparent indifference, replied, "You will "have a pleaſant walk, I hope."—Sir Edward made no comment whatever: therefore

therefore at half paſt eleven ſhe ſet out; and finding Mrs. Conway at home, ſhe ſent back her footman, and walked up into that lady's dreſſing-room, where ſhe was received with the moſt flattering tokens of welcome. Edelfrida rejoiced to ſee Mrs. Conway quite alone, and, fearing interruption, haſtened to unfold the chief purport of her viſit. She did this in a conciſe and graceful manner, ending her little ſtory with an apology for taking the liberty of aſking Mrs. Conway's aſſiſtance in the affair; making her a delicate and well-turned compliment at the ſame time, as a reaſon for her temerity. Mrs. Conway liſtened with the moſt attentive politeneſs; and when Edelfrida ceaſed ſpeaking, ſhe took her hand with an air of kindneſs, and replied, "The confidence you re-
"poſe in me, demands my ſincere ac-
"knowledgments, ſince it proves that
"you do not think me unworthy of it.
"I will not, therefore, offer you any

"aſſurances

" aſſurances of my ſecrecy in this affair,
" but haſten to convince you that I am
" happy in an opportunity of being
" uſeful to you, on any occaſion. Suffer
" me, however, my ſweet young friend,
" to lament the neceſſity there is for con-
" cealment in an affair of the nature you
" have explained to me; but knowing
" Captain Mandeville to be a man of
" unblemiſhed honour and integrity, I
" with leſs reluctance ſee you engaged to
" ſoften the rigour of Miſs Dudley's
" preſent ſituation. 'Tis very unfortu-
" nate, when young people are in any
" degree compelled to act in oppoſition
" to the wiſhes of their friends and family;
" and though I can by no means condemn
" your generous warmth in behalf of
" your amiable couſin, I muſt obſerve
" that you have undertaken a dangerous
" office; for, ſhould it ever be known to
" Sir Edward and Lady Dudley, I much
" fear they would reſent it with ſeverity.
" You cannot however now recede."

" No

"No, my dear Madam, nor would I, "if I could recede," ſaid Edelfrida, with warmth: "I owe to Maria every "thing; to my uncle, and Lady Dud-"ley, very little indeed; and though I "do not wiſh them to know the part I "am acting, yet, believe me, rather "than be ungrateful to my beſt and "deareſt friend, I would brave their "diſpleaſure to the utmoſt." "Well," replied Mrs. Conway, ſmiling at her energy, "I hope they never will be "made acquainted with our ſecret; I "admire your enthuſiaſm in the cauſe "of friendſhip, and only recommend "a prudent circumſpection to you. I "will order my carriage, and go with "you myſelf to Kenſington-gate; and "call for you again, in the courſe of "an hour; in which time, I think, you "will have ſaid, and heard, all that the "ſubject, important as it is, demands." Edelfrida expreſſed her acknowledg-ment for this conſiderate kindneſs, with

a vivacity peculiar to herſelf; and when the carriage was ready, the two ladies got into it, and ordered the coachman to drive to Kenſington, where, for a time, they ſeparated. Edelfrida entered the gardens by the door near the palace, and walked on only a few paces, ere ſhe diſcovered Mandeville moving ſlowly forward in a penſive mood; but, the moment he beheld her, he flew on the wings of impatience to meet her; exclaiming, when he came up to her, "Welcome, my guardian Genius! but "for your friendly aid, I might have "wandered in doubt, anxiety, and "wretchedneſs, above half my days." "Maria," anſwered ſhe, holding out her hand to him, "bid me greet you "thus, with her beſt affections." "How "does my kind Maria bear our mutual "evil?" ſaid he: "Does ſhe preſerve "her ſpirits to bleſs me with, at ſome "happier, though, alas! diſtant day?" "At preſent," replied Edelfrida, "ſhe

"is

" is low, and uneaſy: indeed, it is " impoſſible ſhe ſhould be otherwiſe, " till ſhe is aſſured that your reſolution, " in this diſtreſſing ſituation of affairs, " is, like her own, immoveably fixed " to one point." " My reſolution," returned he with ſpirit, " is to devote " myſelf to the faith I have ſworn to " the moſt beloved of women; it is " herſelf, and not her fortune, I ſeek to " poſſeſs; and though I will never " urge her to act in direct oppoſition " to her father's will, if by any means " his conſent to our union can ever be " obtained, yet I will at any moment " joyfully ſhare with her the compe- " tency which I can now call my own; " patiently waiting for thoſe contin- " gencies which may hereafter be- " friend us." " She merits this ge- " nerous affection," ſaid Edelfrida: " ſhe bid me tell you, that, if you " are content to wait for a more " proſperous period, no conſideration,

" no command or intreaty ſhall ever " ſhake her conſtancy. At the ſame " time ſhe charges you never to expect " ſhe will marry, contrary to the expreſs " prohibition of her father." " I will " never require any ſuch proof of her " affection, upon my honour," replied Mandeville. " She does not forbid me, " I hope," continued he, " reſenting, " in as pointed terms as a man can re- " ſent to a woman, Lady Wilford's " ſcandalous behaviour." " She leaves " you to your own diſcretion and feel- " ings on that ſubject," replied Edelfrida. They then entered fully into the whole affair; both beſtowing on Lady Wilford the cenſure ſhe ſo juſtly merited, for her duplicity in the beginning, and her malice in the ending of the buſineſs. Edelfrida expreſſed herſelf ſo warmly the friend of Mandeville, as well as of Maria, and promiſed every thing they could require of her, to alleviate the pain they were, at leaſt for

ſome

ſome time, condemned to endure in abſence, and the deprivation of all intercourſe, that Mandeville, in the enthuſiaſm of his gratitude, perceiving no perſon near enough to obſerve them, preſſed her hand to his lips, with the warmth and fervency of a lover, to all appearance, ſhe attempting not to withdraw it—when, behold, at that moment, while they were ſo deeply engaged by what had paſſed in converſation between them, a man, in deep mourning, darted acroſs the walk, and, caſting on Edelfrida a look of mingled diſdain and fury, ſtruck directly into another path. She faintly ſhrieked with ſurpriſe and terror, grew pale as death, and tottered ſo much, that, if Mandeville had not inſtantly caught hold of her, ſhe would have fallen. "Good heaven!" cried he, "what can be the occaſion of this "alarming agitation? and what could "that ſtranger's ſudden appearance, "and his fiery glance, mean? Tell

" me, Edelfrida, ſhall I follow him,
" and demand an explanation?" " Not
" for worlds," exclaimed ſhe, almoſt breathleſs, and ſeizing hold of him, as if fearful he was flying from her. " Take me to a ſeat," added ſhe, " and " I will endeavour to recover myſelf." He inſtantly, almoſt, carried her to one of the ſeats, where, by degrees, ſhe became leſs agitated; and when ſhe was tolerably compoſed, ſhe ſaid, " I have " one favour to beg of you, Captain " Mandeville; and your promiſing to " comply with my requeſt, will for " ever oblige me." " Only name it," replied he, " and be aſſured of my " obedience to it." " It is, then," reſumed ſhe, ſighing, " that you will " never mention to any perſon, the " emotion that ſtranger threw me into. " Never ſeek to diſcover who he is; " or, ſhould any chance introduce you " to each other, never enquire from " him the reaſon of what it is impoſſible

" you

" you ſhould comprehend at preſent,
" and what you will, I hope, excuſe
" me, if I do not explain to you."
" I will not deny," returned Mandeville, " but that my curioſity is
" greatly excited, and that the intereſt
" I muſt ever feel in your happineſs
" would prompt me to diſcover what is
" now a myſtery to me; but, ſince you
" command me to ſilence, I obey. I
" will ſuppreſs my curioſity, and direct
" my inclination to ſerve you in any
" other path you will permit me to
" purſue." " I depend then upon
" your promiſe," replied ſhe, " and
" very ſincerely thank you for your
" good intentions towards me. It is
" now time to ſeparate; Mrs. Conway
" will be waiting for me." Saying this, ſhe roſe up, and ſlowly moved towards the door by which ſhe entered, caſting an anxious eye towards the place into which the inexplicable Henry (for it was no other than Mr. Henry Evelyne)

had vaniſhed. That Mandeville might not be ſeen, even by Mrs. Conway's ſervants, he took leave of Edelfrida ere they reached the door. She proceeded to it, and on the other ſide found her friend ready to receive her. She got into the carriage, and requeſted to be ſet down in St. James's Square, pleading that Maria would be impatient to hear the ſucceſs of her conference. Mrs. Conway admitted the reaſon, though ſhe reluctantly parted with her, wiſhing to have kept her the whole day at her houſe. During the ride, Edelfrida, with difficulty, collected her thoughts to the ſubject on which Mrs. Conway naturally expected her to talk; and that lady, remarking her pale and diſordered countenance, ſhe complained of being ſeized with a ſudden faintneſs in the gardens, which ſhe had not yet got the better of entirely. Mrs. Conway gave her ſalts, and inſiſted on her not talking, when ſhe heard of her indiſpoſition,

diſpoſition, which her looks too well confirmed. This indulgence was peculiarly gratifying to Edelfrida; for her mind was in ſuch a ſtate of confuſion and miſery, that all exertion was painful in the extreme. At Sir Edward's door ſhe wiſhed Mrs. Conway good morning, with many grateful acknowledgments for her kindneſs; and that lady took leave of her, grieved at her illneſs, and feelingly intereſted in her welfare. The moment ſhe got into the houſe, ſhe haſtened into her own room, reſolved, though her heart was aching with agony, to conſtrain herſelf ſo far as to give her friend a clear and ſuccinct account of all that had paſſed between her and Mandeville. Maria quickly joined her, all impatience to learn the fate ſhe was to expect; but, upon beholding Edelfrida, ſeated like the pale ſtatue of Deſpair, her eyes fixed, and every feature expreſſive of her inward agitation, ſhe ſtarted back, and, for-

getting at that inſtant her own important concerns, ſhe exclaimed, " My beloved " Edelfrida, what has reduced you to " this deplorable ſtate?" Then, immediately ſuppoſing that her affectionate heart was charged with grief and pity, by ſomething ſhe had to communicate to herſelf, ſhe added, " If you are af- " flicted on my account, what will be- " come of me? At the moment when " your ſupporting tenderneſs is moſt " neceſſary to me, you are rendered in- " capable of affording it to me." Edelfrida roſe from her chair, and taking Maria by the hand, replied, as calmly as her feelings would ſuffer her, " No, " my dear Maria, greatly as I muſt " ever be intereſted in your happineſs, " my affliction does not now proceed " from that ſource. Mandeville is all " you could deſire him; faithful, af- " fectionate, and obedient to your " wiſhes." She then related what had

paſſed,

paſſed, as minutely as poſſible; for all which Maria thanked her in no common ſtrain of gratitude; then anxiouſly demanded the cauſe of her own dejection of ſpirits.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"YOU aſk me, my dear friend," replied Edelfrida, "why I am unhappy; and I can ſcarcely anſwer the enquiry; for ought the ſight of a man who has baſely deſerted me without a cauſe, to create theſe diſtreſſing emotions?" "Have you, then, ſeen Mr. Henry Evelyne?" aſked Maria with quickneſs. "Unfortunately, I have," ſaid Edelfrida: "in the moment when Mandeville, too grateful for the little ſervice in my power to perform for my friends, was thanking me, for which purpoſe he raiſed my hand to his lips—at that luckleſs moment, then, Mr. Henry Evelyne croſſed us in the walk; and to one who had not heard our converſation, I muſt own, the privacy we ſeemed

"to

" to court, together with the attitude
" in which we were, might juſtify a
" conjecture that we were rather lovers
" than friends. He caſt on me a look
" of mortifying diſdain, mixed with
" the fierce ſpirit of anger. I inſtantly
" ſhrieked; he, however, was gone;
" but Mandeville was all aſtoniſhment,
" and offered to follow him, for an ex-
" planation of his conduct. To that,
" you may be aſſured, I warmly ob-
" jected, and made him promiſe never
" to enquire further into the affair."
" Good heaven," cried Maria, " how
" very unfortunate! What reproaches
" have I to make myſelf, for being,
" though innocently, the cauſe of this
" moſt vexatious accident! But ſure,
" my dear friend, now that he is come
" to town, he will himſelf ſeek occaſion
" to explain his own ſilence, and give
" you an opportunity of clearing up an
" affair in which appearances only are
" againſt you, as I can with gratitude
" teſtify."

" teſtify." " Impoſſible," returned Edelfrida; " he can aſſign no reaſon " for his ſilence, which I ought to ad- " mit, or which my pride, juſtly of- " fended, will ſuffer me to liſten to; " nor will I ever condeſcend to explain " any part of my conduct to a man " who could neglect me in the manner " he has done. And," added ſhe, at- tempting to ſmile, " had Mandeville " been my lover, inſtead of my friend, " you, Maria, are the only perſon who " have any right to complain. Becauſe " deſerted by Mr. Henry Evelyne, was " I to continue the ſlave of an ill-placed " affection, and pine out my life in " ſorrow? No: though I confeſs my " weakneſs to you, I would have him " think me perfectly free from all par- " tiality to him; I would have him be- " lieve that I am attached to another. " Heaven and you, however, my dear " Maria, ſhall witneſs for me, that, " though I trifle too often, my heart

" ſhall

" ſhall never know another paſſion; no
" other object ſhall ever find a place in
" it. There at leaſt I triumph over
" him. I can be conſtant, even to mi-
" ſery; he, fickle as the paſſing wind."
" He has thrown away a treaſure,"
replied Maria, " and I cannot help
" feeling ſome degree of pity for him:
" though the anguiſh he has made you
" endure deſerves a puniſhment of no
" ſhort duration, yet I own, Edelfrida,
" I long to have an explanation be-
" tween you; for that angry and diſ-
" dainful glance which he caſt on you
" this morning, looks not like indif-
" ference on his part." " If you love
" me," ſaid Edelfrida, " never, Maria,
" never attempt to force him into any
" explanation: I could not ſurvive the
" mortification." " Be aſſured," re-
turned Miſs Dudley, " I will never
" attempt any thing to give you pain."
Thus, while the couſins held each other
in converſation, a ſervant came up to

let

let Edelfrida know that Sir Edward wiſhed to ſpeak with her in the library. "What can he want?" exclaimed ſhe to Maria—"ſure he can't have heard "of my expecting Mandeville!" "I "hope not," replied Maria, trembling at the very idea. Edelfrida, taking ſome little time to compoſe herſelf, at length obeyed the ſummons, and reluctantly bent her ſteps towards the library. She examined her uncle's countenance, as ſhe entered, in order to diſcover if his commands with her were to accuſe her of plotting againſt his authority: but, inſtead of the ſeverity ſhe expected to encounter, a ſmile of complacency ſat on his features. "Sit down, Edelfrida," ſaid he, "I have ſomething "to communicate which merits your ſe-"rious attention. I have had a viſit "this morning from a friend of yours." "Can it be the faithleſs Henry?" ſaid ſhe to herſelf—"If it is, then I am "ruined indeed."—"One," continued

Sir

Sir Edward, " who wiſhes for a ſtill " nearer intereſt in your welfare and " happineſs." " I am obliged to him," ſaid Edelfrida, forcing herſelf to ſpeak. " I think you are," reſumed her uncle; " for his intentions towards " you are truly noble and generous: " his fortune is a princely one, and " he wiſhes you to be the partner " of it." " Pray, Sir, to whom am " I ſo much indebted?" aſked ſhe. " I ſhould imagine," replied Sir Edward, ſmiling, " it was almoſt needleſs " to mention Mr. Martin." At the name of Martin Edelfrida's heart ſunk ſtill more; mortified, ſhocked, and diſappointed, ſhe burſt into tears, inſtead of exhibiting the marks of joy her uncle expected. " What can this mean?" exclaimed Sir Edward—" I " am totally at a loſs to comprehend " it." Edelfrida was unable to reply; but, her agitation increaſing, ſhe got up, and, in broken and almoſt inarticulate

culate accents, begged leave to retire. "Go, child," ſaid her uncle; "and, "when you have compoſed yourſelf, "you muſt explain to me the cauſe of "this apparent grief." Glad of the permiſſion, ſhe returned to her apartment, where, throwing herſelf on the bed, ſhe indulged the vehemence of her affliction, without being capable of diſtinctly telling, even herſelf, from whence it aroſe, except that the adventure in Kenſington Gardens had planted a freſh thorn in her before-wounded heart. When ſhe had given full and free vent to the emotions which tortured her mind, ſhe inſenſibly regained ſufficient calmneſs to reflect on what her uncle had ſaid to her; and, to ſee the neceſſity of replying to him immediately, no deliberation was requiſite to form a deciſive opinion upon: ſhe being already determined, her native candour of diſpoſition now induced her to lay on herſelf the blame of having created this addi-

additional trouble to the many diſagreeable circumſtances of her ſituation. "My own folly and levity," cried ſhe, as ſhe traverſed her room, "have "drawn upon me the diſtreſſing ne-"ceſſity of diſappointing Sir Edward's "hopes, conſequently rouſing his latent "diſpleaſure againſt me; and, had not "the faithleſs Henry falſified all his "vows of everlaſting affection ere I "entered this life of ſorrowful diſſi-"pation, I might juſtly accuſe myſelf "of having forfeited all title to his "regard: but there I am preſerved "from the ſting of ſelf-reproach. I "ought," continued ſhe, deeply ſighing, "I ought to thank him for this "acquittal."—Here Miſs Dudley entered, and fearfully aſked what her father had wanted with Edelfrida: this queſtion was anſwered, by repeating what Sir Edward had ſaid. By this means Maria's fears were removed; though ſhe truly ſympathiſed with her friend

friend in the vexation Martin's addreſſes were likely, indeed certain, to create; for they both foreſaw that he would not be refuſed without highly reſenting the indignity; nor would Sir Edward and Lady Dudley quietly give up the hopes of ſettling her ſo advantageouſly. "Be that as it may," ſaid Edelfrida, "I will never marry him. "I own I have done wrong, very wrong, "in ever ſuffering him to ſuppoſe for "an inſtant that he could poſſibly be "acceptable to me: his own vanity "however, rather than my behaviour, "muſt have led him into the error; "for, though I have ſometimes been "tolerably civil to him, I have much "oftener been intolerably rude; for "which, to any other man, I ſhould "ſeverely have condemned myſelf." "As to his feelings on the ſubject," replied Maria, "I ſhould give myſelf "very little trouble about them, ſince "his inſufferable vanity and ſelf-con-

"ceit

" ceit deſerve mortification: neither
" ſhould I regard his diſpleaſure, or
" his report of your conduct; for he is
" univerſally known to be as contemp-
" tible as a man can be, in point of
" real ſenſe, generoſity, or manly ſpirit;
" and though, to one poſſeſſed of ſo
" ſplendid a fortune the world will always
" pay ſome homage, yet little ſerious
" attention will, I dare venture to pro-
" nounce, be paid to the dictates of
" his revenge." " Loſt as I am,"
ſaid Elfrida, " to every hope of hap-
" pineſs, and buried, as I foreſee I
" ſoon ſhall be, in obſcurity, it is of
" little moment what the world may
" think of me: I ſhall quickly be for-
" gotten; would I could as eaſily for-
" get!" " How poor are the words
" of conſolation which I only can offer
" you!" cried Maria: " 'tis now my
" greateſt grief that I poſſeſs not the
" power to prove my friendſhip, by
" thoſe means which can alone effec-

" tually

" tually relieve you." " I accept your " kind wiſhes, my dear Maria," ſaid the weeping Edelfrida, " with equal " gratitude; certain that your actions " would prove them ſincere, were " you at liberty to act." " I am " bound to you," returned Miſs Dudley, " by ties which the hand of " death ſhall alone diſſolve, be aſſured; " and the inſtant of emancipation ſhall " be dedicated to friendſhip, and the " ſervices it requires." While Maria and Edelfrida converſed, the hour of dinner arrived; and they were informed that it was on the table. Edelfrida haſtily wiped her eyes, and in her morning dreſs prepared to accompany her friend into the parlour. With a heavy heart, and little inclination to eat, they ſeated themſelves at table in ſilence, which was only broken by ſome occaſional remarks of Sir Edward's, or Lady Dudley's, on indifferent ſubjects, whilſt the ſervants remained in the room;

room; and Edelfrida dreaded their departure; for, though ſhe knew ſhe muſt come to an explanation with her uncle, ſhe did not wiſh that Lady Dudley ſhould be preſent at it, knowing that her haughty and impatient temper would augment all her difficulties. She was not however to eſcape; for, as ſoon as the ſervants were gone, her Ladyſhip begun.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXV.

"SIR Edward," ſaid her Ladyſhip, "I believe I may ſay, that you "are not leſs impatient than myſelf "for an explanation of this Lady's "intentions"—pointing to Edelfrida. "On a ſubject ſo important," replied he, with much gravity, "all "trifling is unpardonable, and all "procraſtination improper; therefore, "Edelfrida, you muſt now declare "your ſentiments, that I may be en-"abled to treat Mr. Martin like a "gentleman, which his very generous "propoſal merits in no ſmall degree." Edelfrida, during this ſpeech, endeavoured to collect firmneſs for the occaſion: but the indignant countenance and ſcrutiniſing eye of Lady Dudley baffled the feeble attempts ſhe was making

making for the purpoſe of reply; and ſhe continued ſilent for ſome minutes after Sir Edward had ceaſed ſpeaking. "You muſt allow time for delibe-"ration," ſaid her Ladyſhip ſarcaſtically: "it is no eaſy matter for a "young lady of ſuch rare beauty and "accompliſhments, to reſolve on be-"ſtowing herſelf upon a gentleman "whoſe pretenſions are ſo trifling. "Romance might not paint Mr. Martin "as an Adonis perhaps."—"But com-"mon ſenſe repreſents him as a very "deſirable match for a young woman "with high notions and a ſmall for-"tune," returned Sir Edward. "I "fear, Sir," ſaid Edelfrida, now compelling herſelf to ſpeak, "I fear I "ſhall incur your heavieſt diſpleaſure, "when I declare my fixed reſolution "to decline Mr. Martin's addreſſes." Sir Edward looked ſteadily at her; Lady Dudley laughed, but it was rather a laugh of anger than pleaſure: Maria

was ready to burſt into tears every minute. "Strange as it may appear," reſumed Edelfrida, who had pauſed for an inſtant, "that I who profeſs ſo "incompetent a proviſion to the ſtyle "of life in which I am now, ſhould "reject, perhaps, the only opportunity "I may ever have of ſecuring an "eſtabliſhment ſo far above what the "generality poſſeſs, and ſo very far "above my hopes or expectations; "it is nevertheleſs certain, that no "conſideration ſhall tempt me to ac-"cept it; and I muſt truſt to your "goodneſs, Sir, to tell Mr. Martin "my determination, and at the ſame "time offer him my thanks for ſo flat-"tering a mark of his approbation."

"You cannot be ſerious," exclaimed Sir Edward: "why, 'tis folly and mad-"neſs in the extreme, to refuſe a match "that will place you in the moſt af-"fluent and elegant condition of life. "Beſides, Mr. Martin aſſured me,

that

" that he had the moſt unqueſtionable
" reaſon to believe, you had no objec-
" tion to his applying to me, as your
" uncle and guardian; and now, if I
" tell him you poſitively reject him,
" what will you ſay in anſwer to his
" charge of having moſt diſgracefully
" trifled with him? This conſidera-
" tion, at leaſt, demands your moſt ſe-
" rious attention; for, believe me, a
" woman with the character of a jilt,
" let her birth, her beauty, or her for-
" tune, be ever ſo ſuperior, deſerves,
" and will infallibly meet with con-
" tempt." " If Mr. Martin's vanity,
replied Edelfrida with reviving cou-
rage and indignant warmth, " has led
" him into an error, he muſt apply to
" the ſame ſource for a remedy: it can
" ſcarcely be expected that I ſhould
" ſacrifice my feelings, to preſerve his
" good opinion, or gain the world's
" applauſe. I aim not at the affluence
" or ſplendour he can offer; nor will

" I barter my integrity or my happi-
" neſs for the wealth of India, though
" he could boaſt the poſſeſſion of it
" attained with honour and honeſty."
" If this is your final reſolution,"
ſaid her uncle, viſibly chagrined, " I
" can only lament the blind and per-
" verſe folly which ruins your brighter
" proſpects: you may now moſt pro-
" bably ſpend your days in obſcurity;
" for you cannot expect that I,
" who have children of my own,
" ſhould provide for you as a daughter
" of our ancient houſe; no, you muſt
" take the conſequences of your own
" imprudent conduct." " Yes," ex-
claimed Lady Dudley, " you muſt,
" Madam, ſummon all your for-
" titude to ſupport a change of life
" and manners, which, I fancy, will
" ill accord with your inclinations:
" do not flatter yourſelf that I will
" again ſubmit to your running the
" round of pleaſure and diſſipation,

" you

" you have this winter ſo inceſſantly
" purſued. Your own income will not,
" I am certain, half ſupply your un-
" bounded extravagance; and you
" ſhall find Miſs Dudley's purſe no
" longer open, I give you my word:
" if ſhe has ſo much to ſpare, her al-
" lowance will admit of a diminution
" another way. If I bring you to
" London at all, I ſhall take care that
" you do not incur the cenſure your
" behaviour has ſo well deſerved: from
" henceforth, I deſire you will lay
" aſide the airs of a fine lady; the
" character was never intended for
" you, Ma'am; and, ſince fortune
" has been ſo unjuſt to your merits,
" you muſt learn to accommodate
" yourſelf to her humour, and mine a
" little too." " Fortune," ſaid Edel-
frida with ſpirit, " has been ſuffi-
" ciently kind, in preſerving me from
" the moſt wretched of all conditions,
" a ſtate of dependence; I will there-

" fore ſpare your Ladyſhip the trouble " of laying down rules for my future " conduct." " As you pleaſe, Ma'am," returned her Ladyſhip ſcornfully: " if " you chooſe to releaſe me from " that trouble, I ſhall have no cauſe " to repine.". Edelfrida then left the room, and in her own ſat down to ruminate on the paſt, and, if poſſible, try to conſider how ſhe ſhould diſpoſe of herſelf in future: but, ere ſhe could arrange her ideas into any degree of order, Maria came to tell her that Lady Wilford and Miſs Wilford were in the drawing-room, come, ſhe had no doubt, to gratify their curioſity reſpecting Martin: " My mother," added ſhe, " in- " ſiſts on my ſitting in the room with " them; and I fear I cannot eſcape, " though my whole ſoul revolts againſt " their malice and treachery. We " coldly ſaluted each other on the " ſtairs, where we met; and, if I muſt " go down to them, I ſhall ſtill, and

" ever

" ever I believe, preſerve my reſent-
" ment, which I ſhall take no pains
" to conceal from them." " 'Tis
" very mortifying," replied Edelfrida,
" that you muſt of neceſſity be in their
" company. My appearance may be
" diſpenſed with, I preſume." " My mo-
" ther cannot be more offended or more
" angry than ſhe is already," ſaid Ma-
ria; " I would therefore do as I felt
" myſelf moſt inclined, if I were you."
" My inclination, then," replied Edel-
frida, " will never carry me into the
" preſence of two people, who treat
" me with the moſt inſolent contempt,
" and who muſt ever be to me objects
" of averſion, as well on my own ac-
" count as yours, Maria. I don't ſup-
" poſe I ſhall be enquired for; no apo-
" logy is therefore neceſſary: but, if
" I am, ſay I have got the head-ach,
" if you pleaſe; and if you added the
" heart-ach too, you would not injure
" the truth; but that would gratify
" them." " I fear it would," re-

turned Maria, ſighing: "they have "practiſed the art of tormenting with "too much ſucceſs already." Miſs Dudley's maid now came to let her know that ſhe was deſired to go down. She kiſſed Edelfrida's burning cheek, and conjuring her to bear up againſt melancholy, reluctantly left her, to join the party below ſtairs. When Edelfrida was once more alone, her thoughts inſenſibly fell on Mr. Henry Evelyne. She could not but wonder at his ſeeking to ſhock and ſurpriſe her by his indignant and angry glances, and by his ſudden appearance, when he himſelf had ſo long ceaſed to preſerve his affection for her: ſhe then recollected his deep mourning; and ſoftening at the idea of his having loſt ſome friend, perhaps his amiable brother, ſhe wept over this image of her imagination, and almoſt accuſed herſelf for doubting his truth and conſtancy; though, alas, ſhe had ſuch indubitable proofs of his perfidy

her, and his own vows. "Perhaps," ſaid ſhe, "he has written, and by ſome "unlucky accident his letters have "been loſt; he may have been en- "gaged too in ſome melancholy ſcenes "which would not ſuffer him to ſeek "me ſooner; and now, finding me in "the moſt awkward of all ſituations, "he thinks I am unworthy his further "regard or attention." Overpowered by theſe reflections, ſhe reſigned herſelf to ſorrow, and a thouſand times called upon death to releaſe her from her wretched exiſtence; then ſtarting, ſhe cried, "Why do I thus tamely yield "myſelf to miſery? why do I cheriſh "an unworthy paſſion, a diſgraceful "ſoftneſs, for a man who flies, neg- "lects, and ſcorns me?" She then walked about, in a ſtate of the moſt diſordered wildneſs of affliction, her pride and her affections ſo much at war with each other that her ſoul was agitated beyond the power of deſcription: by turns ſhe

as calm, penſive, and given up to melancholy; then wild, empaſſioned, and violent in her grief; till, exhauſted by contending emotions, ſhe ſunk almoſt lifeleſs into a chair, and remained in that ſituation till after eleven o'clock, when Maria (it being the firſt moment of liberty) came to her ere ſhe went to bed. Terrified to find her in ſuch a dreadful condition, ſhe called her maid, and ordered her to go down to the houſekeeper for ſomething to revive the failing ſenſes of her friend; ſhe, in the mean time, hanging over her in ſilent anguiſh. When the maid returned, they applied the remedies ſhe brought with her, then undreſſed the ſtill helpleſs Edelfrida, and conveyed her between them to bed. Maria reſolved to ſit by her the whole night; and the maid, who could not be prevailed on to leave her miſtreſs alone in ſuch diſtreſs, placed herſelf on the other ſide the bed. Edelfrida, by ſlow degrees, recovered,

and

and betwen one and two o'clock fell into a quiet ſlumber. Miſs Dudley then, at the earneſt intreaty of her ſervant, conſented to retire to her own room, on condition that ſhe would ſtay, and, if there was any alteration, inſtantly call her. This the maid promiſed; and Maria, breathing a prayer for her lovely friend's reſtoration to happineſs as well as health, left her for a time to ſeek the repoſe her own haraſſed ſpirits ſtood ſo much in need of. Edelfrida continued to doſe till near morning.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE next morning early, Miſs Dudley, whoſe anxiety had not ſuffered her to enjoy much ſleep, returned into Edelfrida's room, and was agreeably ſurpriſed to find her ſo well recovered: Maria then ſent her maid to bed, and took her place by the ſide of her beloved friend. "I am grieved," ſaid Edelfrida, "to find how much "trouble and pain I inflicted on my "too tender-hearted Maria, laſt night; "indeed, my dear friend, if you knew "to what exceſs I indulged my ſorrow, "which was the cauſe of my indiſpo-"ſition, you ought to chide rather "than pity me." "The ſituation in "which I found you," replied Maria, "muſt have baniſhed the rancour "from my ſiſter's and Miſs Wilford's

"boſom,

" boſom, for a time at leaſt. How then
" could I behold my deareſt friend,
" reduced apparently to the gates of
" death, without being moved to the
" ſofteſt ſympathy? Beſides, my love,
" though I will not allow you to give
" way to deſpair, I feel that you have
" too much reaſon for your grief:
" would to heaven I could alleviate
" it!" " You do alleviate, you al-
" moſt cure it," cried Edelfrida, " by
" your kind, affectionate, and gene-
" rous friendſhip; but for that bleſſ-
" ing, I were a wretch indeed, Maria.
" But tell me," continued ſhe, " what
" paſſed between Lady Wilford and
" you, laſt night." " Indeed," re-
plied Maria ſighing, " I do not wiſh
" to recollect how much cauſe I have
" to deſpiſe and condemn one ſo nearly
" related to me; yet, if to hear of ill-
" natured and malicious obſervations,
" unjuſt cenſure, and ſpiteful inuendoes,
" is what you deſire, Edelfrida, I will

endea-

" endeavour to repeat part of the con-
" verſation." " I did not expect," replied ſhe, half-ſmiling, " that the
" parties had changed their natures
" ſince I had laſt the misfortune to be
" in their company; but, if it is pain-
" ful to you to tell me the ſubſtance
" of their remarks, I will not deſire
" it." " 'Tis certainly painful ever to
" think of them," returned Maria;
" but, as it is utterly impoſſible to ba-
" niſh them from our memories, while
" we have ſuch wounding marks of
" them of them on our minds, I need
" make leſs ſcruple of ſpeaking about
" them. When I got into the draw-
" ing-room, my ſiſter, with her accuſ-
" tomed lowering countenance and
" haughty inſolence of manner, juſt
" careleſsly moved; Miſs Wilford
" followed her example; I returned
" their civilities with the utmoſt de-
" gree of reſerve, and ſeated myſelf
" on the oppoſite ſide the room, taking

" out

" out my work, that I might pay leſs
" attention to them." " Shall we not
" be honoured by Miſs Edelfrida's pre-
" ſence?" ſaid Lady Wilford with a con-
" temptuous grin. This ſpeech was not
" particularly addreſſed to me, therefore I
" gave it no anſwer; but my mother re-
" plied, " I fancy the lady is a little ſick.
" I took the liberty of giving her a
" word of advice, after ſhe had had the
" folly and inſolence to refuſe Mr.
" Martin." " I preſume," cried my
" ſiſter, " ſhe will repent that meaſure,
" when ſhe finds that her beauty does
" not procure her the conſtant admi-
" ration ſhe has the vanity to expect."
" Dear Lady Wilford," exclaimed her
" Ladyſhip's amiable ſiſter, " I wonder
" you ſhould queſtion the power and
" influence of your couſin's beauty! It
" has already wrought a miracle, you
" know; it has transformed that gloomy
" miſanthrope Dormer; and no doubt
" he will reward the fair enchantreſs

" by

" by beſtowing himſelf upon her." At
" this witty ſpeech both ladies laughed;
" I continued my employment, without
" ſeeming to obſerve them. When my
" ſweet ſiſter had recovered this fit of
" mirth, ſhe ſaid, " I imagine Mrs. Con-
" way will not be very fond of her new
" ſiſter, though ſhe affects ſuch prodi-
" gious fondneſs for her as a friend: ſhe
" is injured, if ſhe has not appropriated
" her brother's fortune to her own and
" her children's uſe, long before this time;
" notwithſtanding his little *protégé* the
" young ſailor is ſuppoſed to have a very
" ſtrong claim upon him." " What
" did ſhe mean?" exclaimed Edelfrida.
" Why", replied Maria, " ſhe meant
" to inſinuate that Dormer had an ille-
" gitimate ſon, whom Mrs. Conway
" would deprive of his father's fortune.
" Did you ever hear a hint of the kind
" before?" ſaid Edelfrida. " Never,"
returned Maria, " in all my life; on
" the contrary, I have always heard

both

" both Mr. Dormer and Mrs. Conway
" ſpoken of in the higheſt terms of
" praiſe and approbation; and I believe
" that my ſiſter and Miſs Wilford fabri-
" cated the ſtory they obliquely told to
" their diſadvantage." " How infa-
" mous!" ſaid Edelfrida, " how de-
" ſpicable! but 'tis plain to ſee that
" they ſicken at all praiſe which is
" not beſtowed on themſelves; and that
" they merit none, their lives ſuffici-
" ently teſtify." " Lady Wilford," re-
ſumed Maria, " provoked, I ſuppoſe,
" at my diſregard of their ill-nature,
" for I had not yet ſpoken, at length
" addreſſed me—" What is your opinion
" on this ſubject, Miſs Dudley?" " So
" directly oppoſite to your Ladyſhip's,"
" I replied, ſtill looking on my work,
" that I ſhall not at preſent give it."
" Very deciſive and ſatisfactory, upon
" my word," cried ſhe, affecting to
" laugh. " Fy, Fy, ſaid my father,
" to encourage this ſplenetic humour,

amongſt

" amongſt ſuch very near relations, who
" ſhould be friends! I diſapprove of
" it: it deſtroys my peace, and is very
" injurious to yourſelves." " You'll give
" me leave, Sir," replied my ſiſter angrily,
" to ſpeak my ſentiments, and to ob-
" ſerve that Miſs Dudley's behaviour
" is very extraordinary, and, I muſt ſay,
" very impertinent." My father find-
" ing ſhe was not to be ſilenced, now
" left the room; and I returned to her
" charge of impertinence this anſwer, " If
" Lady Wilford thinks it either extraor-
" dinary or impertinent to reſent an in-
" jury, my conduct will long appear in
" that light to her; for, though I owe to
" my father and mother obedience to
" their commands, I owe nothing to a
" ſiſter who has taken pains to ruin my
" happineſs." " I think, Ma'am," re-
" plied ſhe, " you ought rather to thank
" me for having preſerved me from
" mine." " I fancy moſt people will
" be of that opinion," ſaid Miſs
Wilford

" Wilford pertly." " You have the " thanks of thoſe who are more capable " of judging," cried my mother, " caſt- " ing an angry look on me: " why " therefore vex yourſelf, Caroline, about " what a girl thinks, who has neither " reaſon nor prudence to direct her, " and who has a friend that delights to " encourage her in oppoſition to her " family." Whatever contempt we may " feel," replied Lady Wilford, her eyes " flaſhing fury, " for an ungrateful ob- " ject, yet 'tis impoſſible to help being " vexed, having taken pains to ſerve " one who repays it with an inſolent " reſentment." " I recommend it then " to your Ladyſhip," ſaid I, " to leave " that contemptible and ungrateful ob- " ject to her fate, which can never be " improved by your interference; and " to you, Miſs Wilford," I continued, " turning towards her, " I am already " too much indebted; I beg you will " not increaſe the load of obligation,

" by

" by giving yourſelf farther trouble
" about me or my affairs." " You
" have really profited exceedingly,"
" exclaimed my ſiſter, ſcarcely able to
" keep her paſſion in any tolerable
" bounds, " by your amiable couſin's
" example and manners: I can hardly
" perſuade myſelf that ſome of the
" ſpeeches Miſs Dudley has juſt fa-
" voured us with, were not the coin-
" age of her own gentle friend's brain;
" but I ſuppoſe ſhe has given you a
" few leſſons, Ma'am." " If you mean
" Edelfrida," I replied, " I hope I have
" profited by her example and friend-
" ſhip; at leaſt I am ſure it is my own
" fault if I have not, for I am ac-
" quainted with very few people who
" poſſeſs half her good qualities: and
" with a juſt pride I may in one reſpect
" ſay I reſemble her; we alike deteſt
" falſhood and deceit, and feel the ut-
" moſt ſcorn and abhorrence, when we
" behold or experience the effects of

thoſe

" thoſe malignant paſſions which ſtrike
" at the root of all happineſs." " What
" do you mean?" cried Lady Wilford,
" pale and trembling with rage. " I
" have made no application," ſaid I:
" thoſe that deſerve the cenſure, may, if
" they pleaſe." She then got off her
" ſeat in ſuch a fury, that I was not cer-
" tain ſhe did not mean to box my ears:
" her paſſion, however, was vented on the
" bell, which ſhe rung ſo violently, that I
" fancy the ſervants thought ſomething
" very terrible was the matter; for Tho-
" mas came running up with an enqui-
" ring countenance. " Tell James to
" order my carriage inſtantly," ſaid her
" Ladyſhip haughtily. " James is not
" here, my Lady," replied the footman.
" What does he mean by diſobeying my
" orders, an inſolent fellow?" To this
" Thomas could make no anſwer. She
" then ſaid, " Send ſomebody to my
" houſe immediately, and bid them

" bring

" bring my coach." Pray, my dear," cried
" my mother, " ſtay to ſupper, and pay
" no regard to Maria's abſurd reſentment:
" her inſolent ingratitude will be its own
" puniſhment; for ſhe won't have a
" friend in the world, except that flippant
" Miſs above ſtairs, whoſe friendſhip, I
" imagine, will not prove quite ſo agree-
" able as, by the panegyric ſhe has pro-
" nounced on her, ſhe would teach us
" to believe ſhe thinks it." " You
" muſt excuſe me, Ma'am," replied
" my ſiſter, " I ſhall not indeed ſtay to
" be treated in the manner I have been:
" when Miſs Dudley reſumes her ap-
" parent good-humour, recollects to
" whom ſhe has given herſelf ſuch un-
" becoming airs, and thinks proper to
" make an apology, I ſhall have no ob-
" jection to ſit in the ſame room with
" her; till then, I ſhall not ſubject
" myſelf to be taken ſuch liberties
" with." " Maria," ſaid my mother,
" I inſiſt

" I inſiſt upon your aſking your ſiſter's
" pardon." " I am ſorry, Ma'am,"
returned I, " to diſpute your com-
" mands; but as I am not conſcious of
" having been guilty of any offence,
" I muſt beg to be excuſed." " Is
" the harmony of my family to be de-
" ſtroyed by your impertinent folly?" ſaid
" my mother. " 'Tis unjuſt, Ma'am,"
" replied I, " to charge the deſtruction
" of harmony wholly on me; I never
" wilfully interrupt it: but tamely to
" endure reproach in addition to in-
" jury, can ſcarcely be expected from
" any one, let their condition be ever ſo
" mean, unleſs their diſpoſitions were
" equally baſe. From Lady Wilford
" I learnt the unpleaſant leſſon: ſhe has
" practiſed the language of invective
" too long upon me; this is now the
" period of retaliation; and I ſhould be
" unjuſt to myſelf, if I were to let it
" paſs." " Oh, very well, Ma'am, juſt as
" you

" you pleaſe," ſaid ſhe; " you are vaſtly
" welcome to vent your ſpleen on me:
" diſappointments in love are apt to
" make people fretful." Her Ladyſhip
" concluded this ſpeech with a ſmile of
" ſelf-applauſe, for having ſo well re-
" torted upon me, as ſhe imagined; and
" Miſs Wilford, who maliciouſly enjoyed
" the ſcene, laughed out. I ſmiled too,
" but it was a ſmile of contempt. The
" carriage was then announced, and the
" ladies roſe to take their leave. Lady
" Wilford turned to my brother, and
" ſaid, When ſhall we ſee you, Ma'am?"
" then paſſed me with a ſtately air. Miſs
" Wilford graciouſly wiſhed Lady Dud-
" ley good night, and, making me a ſtiff
" curteſey, followed my ſiſter, who ſcold-
" ed her ſervants all the way down ſtairs.
" I rejoiced at their departure, and was
" going to fly up ſtairs to you: but my
" mother perceiving that I was not juſt
" then much delighted with her company

" and

" and converſation, kept me with her,
" out of puniſhment, I ſuppoſe, for daring
" to contradict my amiable ſiſter, and
" diſpute her commands. She beſtowed a
" great deal of advice upon me in no very
" captivating terms; it therefore, I fear,
" failed to make a due impreſſion. I was
" not ſorry when ſupper put an end to it.
" My father made no enquiry why Lady
" Wilſord did not ſtay: indeed, in his
" heart, I dare ſay, he was glad ſhe was
" gone. When the ſervants left the room,
" my mother began to tell how ill I had
" behaved to my ſiſter; to which my fa-
" ther replied, " Though I would by no
" means encourage in Maria that conten-
" tious ſpirit which ſpurns all accommo-
" dation, I yet think Caroline is much
" to blame to interfere any further, or
" indulge that exceſſive warmth of tem-
" per for which ſhe is too remarkable:
" ſhe has done her duty in making us
" acquainted with an affair ſhe was cer-

" tain we ſhould not approve, and there
" ſhe ought to ſtop. I beg, Lady Dud-
" ley, you will tell her this as my opi-
" nion; and from you, Maria, I ſhall
" expect ſome conſideration to my tran-
" quillity: if you ſacrifice your reſent-
" ments to it, it will become you very
" well." " I ſhall be very happy, Sir,"
" returned I, " to give you any and every
" mark of duty and affection in my
" power." " Here then let the ſubject
" drop," ſaid he. After this diſcuſſion,
" we were all ſilent for ſome minutes:
" a few general obſervations were then
" made; and at length the hour of re-
" tiring came; and I haſtened to ſeek
" my friend; but, good Heaven! how
" was I ſhocked to find you in ſuch a
" ſtate!" " The violence of contend-
" ing emotions," replied Edelfrida,
" had deprived me of ſenſe and mo-
" tion, I believe. How greatly am I
" indebted to your kind care for my re-

" ſtoration;

" ſtoration; and I am not leſs indebted
" to my dear Maria for her generous
" defence of me, and warm expreſſions
" of approbation, with which ſhe braved
" the diſpleaſure of Lady Wilford."
" I ſaid only what I thought then and
" ſhall ever think," returned Maria, preſſing her hand affectionately.

Edelfrida now got up, and dreſſed herſelf, to appear below; reſolving that, whatever ſhe might ſuffer from Lady Dudley's ill-nature, ſhe would not indulge thoſe dangerous reflections which might in time injure her faculties, and totally deſtroy every veſtige of peace which yet remained with her, created by the partial kindneſs of a few friends. Though pale, low-ſpirited, and feeble, ſhe endeavoured to exert herſelf, and accompanied Maria into the breakfaſt-room with an air of aſſumed cheerfulneſs; her heart was however bleeding from the deep and recent round it had received in ad-

dition to the one which was very far from having been healed; an aching dread of the future throbbed in her bosom; and the tea she made an effort to swallow felt as though it would choke her.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXVII.

DURING breakfaſt Sir Edward ſcarcely ſpoke: his behaviour to his niece was cold and diſtant; to his daughter, grave, though not croſs. Edelfrida ſaw ſhe had greatly offended him; but, as a reinſtatement in his favour could only be accompliſhed by the ſacrifice of truth and virtue, as well as every ſhadow of happineſs ſhe had yet preſerved, ſhe was conſtrained to ſubmit to his diſpleaſure, and reconcile herſelf to the loſs of even that ſlight affection he had hitherto manifeſted for her; though to the unhappy, every circumſtance, be it ever ſo trifling in itſelf, is an additional cauſe of ſorrow. To the mind diſtempered by grief, all nature wears the aſpect of melancholy: it was ſo with Edelfrida; for, though ſhe had never placed much dependence on her

uncle's affection, nor reſted her hopes of happineſs on his favour and good opinion, now that ſhe appeared irretrievably deprived of them, ſhe began to fancy they were neceſſary to her, and to ſicken at the idea of having forfeited them for ever. Sir Edward retired from the breakfaſt-room without deigning to addreſs a ſyllable to her: her pale and dejected countenance did not ſeem to ſtrike him as any thing extraordinary; her evident emotion (which ſhe could not conceal, when aſſured by his manner of his ſentiments towards her) moved him not; her ſilent ſorrow was diſregarded by him. He was no ſooner gone, than, burſting into tears, ſhe exclaimed, "O Maria! what will become of me? "where ſhall I hide myſelf from the "ſtorm which is ready to overwhelm "me? Teach me patience to endure my "fate." Maria embraced and tried to ſooth her, but in vain: from weeping violently, ſhe fell into a fit of hyſteric laughter,

laughter, and was inſtantly convulſed. Maria, terrified to death, knew not what to do: ſhe did not wiſh the ſervants ſhould ſee her in that condition, and yet ſhe was wholly incapable of aſſiſting her herſelf; at length ſhe rang the bell, and, going to the door, ſent the footman back to fetch her own maid. By very ſlow degrees, Edelfrida became calm once more; and Maria then ſeized the opportunity of perſuading her to go up to her room. She ſuffered herſelf to be led there, where ſhe ſat down like one ſtupified, and dead to all ſenſe. Maria, with tears in her eyes, conjured her to ſpeak; ſhe ſhook her head in ſilence. "Then lie "down and compoſe yourſelf, my deareſt "Edelfrida," ſaid Miſs Dudley, "and "I will not teaze you." Edelfrida quietly yielded to this intreaty; and Maria, with her maid's aſſiſtance, laid her on the bed, where ſhe continued motionleſs, her friend watching her

with great diſtreſs and anxiety of mind: but from this ſituation ſhe was rouſed by a meſſage from Lady Dudley to attend her in her dreſſing-room. Heavily ſhe departed from Edelfrida's bedſide, charging her maid not to ſtir on any account till ſhe returned; which ſhe did in leſs than a quarter of an hour. Edelfrida was ſtill ſilent, though not aſleep; her reſpiration was quick and ſhort; her hand ſhot; yet a frequent ſhivering denoted ſhe was otherwiſe cold. Miſs Dudley ſaid that ſhe was going out in the carriage wiih her mother, but ſhe would firſt go down and conſult the houſekeeper, who was an experienced perſon, and ſend her up to ſee if ſhe could give her couſin any thing which might relieve her—" While I am abſent, Nancy," continued ſhe, " be ſure you remain " here: I would not have her left an " inſtant for the world: if ſhe ſhould " grow the leaſt worſe, ſend for the apo- " thecary without heſitation or delay.'

Miſs

Miſs Dudley then went down; and ſoon after the houſekeeper came up with ſome reſtoratives, which ſhe prevailed on Edelfrida to ſwallow, and ſtaid till ſhe ſaw her revived by them: in the mean time the carriage drove from the door, with Lady Dudley and her daughter in it. Edelfrida ſlowly recovered her recollection, which ſerved, alas! but to ſtrengthen the malady on her mind; ſhe ſighed deeply, and ſuffered a languor inexpreſſible: while ſhe yet lay on the bed, a ſervant came to her door, to ſay Mrs. Conway was in the drawing-room. All unable as ſhe felt herſelf to move or ſpeak, ſhe would not be diſappointed of ſeeing that lady; ſhe therefore got up, and tottered towards the glaſs, to replace her cap, and render herſelf fit to be ſeen: ſhe was convinced, from the firſt glance, that Mrs. Conway would obſerve the alteration, and enquire the cauſe of it. She reſolved then to tell her all that had oc-

curred in the ſhort ſpace which had paſſed ſince ſhe ſaw her laſt; and with this determination, ſhe went down ſtairs, holding by the rail of the ſtair-caſe to ſupport her feeble ſteps as ſhe deſcended. Mrs. Conway came forward to meet her, when ſhe appeared at the drawing-room door, and was juſt beginning to ſpeak; when Edelfrida's languor and ghaſtly dejection of countenance ſtruck her; and, with looks of the tendereſt enquiry, ſhe led her to a ſeat, and placed herſelf in the next chair.

"This attention, my dear Madam," ſaid Edelfrida in a low and murmuring tone of voice, "is peculiarly gratifying to me." "I am ſorry to obſerve, "my ſweet friend," returned Mrs. Conway, "that you are not quite well: "'tis however, I hope, but a ſlight and "accidental indiſpoſition. Since the "day before yeſterday, I never ſaw "you look better, till after you com-

"plained

" plained of a faintneſs when you came " out of Kenſington Gardens." " The " cauſe of my indiſpoſition," replied " ſhe, " is, alas! neither trifling nor " accidental; yet the ſympathy of a " friend like Mrs. Conway, can (how- " ever ſeverely felt) alleviate the pain." " Tell me, then, my dear," ſaid " Mrs. Conway, " tell me from what " cauſe this dejection of ſpirits ariſes; " and, with the moſt feeling intereſt " in it, I will endeavour to apply " that remedy which from the ten- " dereſt friendſhip can flow." Edelfrida now ſummoned reſolution to repeat the diſtreſſing particulars of her ſituation, and concluded with aſking if ſhe could have acted otherwiſe: " Having " once erred, my dear Ma'am," continued ſhe, " in giving Mr. Martin the " ſhadow of encouragement, which his " vanity conſtrued into actual liking on " my part, I certainly deſerve ſome pu-

" niſhment for my levity; but I hope it
" was not neceſſary for me to make
" ſo great a ſacrifice as that of my ever-
" laſting happineſs, as a reparation for
" my fault." By no means," replied
Mrs. Conway; " we will not defend
" the practice of coquetry; but we
" may with truth ſay, Mr. Martin
" merits the mortification his vanity
" has drawn upon him; for ſurely, as
" a man of honour, had he been poſ-
" ſeſſed of one generous or delicate ſen-
" timent, he would have ſued for your
" conſent, ere he had ſolicited Sir Ed-
" ward's: you may, therefore, I think,
" fairly acquit yourſelf with regard to
" him. Your uncle's diſpleaſure, and
" Lady Dudley's overbearing and un-
" feeling temper, are much more ſe-
" rious cauſes of diſtreſs; yet, I hope,
" in time the one will give place to
" more affectionate feelings, and the
" other be rendered of no conſequence

" to

" to you by ſome fortunate change of " condition and ſituation." You are " very good to encourage me to hope," ſaid Edelfrida, faintly ſmiling. " I would " do more than expreſs myſelf inte- " reſted in your happineſs," replied Mrs. Conway; " and, as your preſent reſi- " dence in this houſe cannot be pleaſant, " I hope you can have no objection to " truſt yourſelf with me for a ſhort time, " till the ſtorm is blown over. We " will make a litttle excurſion into the " country to a ſmall villa of ours on " the banks of the Thames, leaving " all theſe angry people to grow " cool at leiſure: what do you ſay to " my ſcheme? " 'Tis juſt the thing " I ſhould like," returned Edelfrida; " but, my dear Madam, I cannot think " of incumbering you with ſuch a " melancholy ſpiritleſs creature as I " am—it would be too great a tax on " your friendſhip and compaſſion. I " have no right to make ſuch heavy de-

" mands

" mands upon them." " Don't talk " in this ſtrain," ſaid Mrs. Conway; " I " won't hear another word: 'tis agreed " that we go to Beech-grove. What " day next week will ſuit you? name " it, and all is fixed." " If you " will be troubled with me", replied Edelfrida, " the earlier the day, the " better I ſhall like it." " Monday " then," ſaid Mrs. Conway; " on Mon- " day morning I will call for you at " twelve o'clock." " I am ſure I ſhall " be impatient for your arrival," ſaid Edelfrida: " but how can I thank you " for your uncommon kindneſs? If you " could read my heart, you would find " it not ungrateful." " The characters " are too legible to be miſtaken," replied Mrs. Conway, ſmiling; " therefore, " my dear, ſpare yourſelf the trouble " of uttering undeſerved acknowledg- " ments, and me the pain of hearing " them." " Do not call them unde- " ſerved, if you will not hear them,"

ſaid

ſaid Edelfrida, " for there I muſt contra-
" dict you." " Well, well," returned her friendly viſitor, " I will not diſ-
" pute the point with you; you ſhall
" have every thing your own way, if
" you will but caſt this frightful lan-
" guor from you, and reſume your na-
" tive cheerfulneſs." " You are de-
" termined—you, at leaſt, will give me
" no excuſe for indulging it," replied Edelfrida; " and I know of no better
" antidote than your kindneſs and ſo-
" ciety, though I cannot promiſe that
" even they will wholly cure me."
" We will try," ſaid Mrs. Conway,
" when once we have got you out of
" this infectious town: the very air of
" it is at preſent as injurious to your
" your repoſe, as it has been to your
" complexion; but both, I truſt, will
" be happily reſtored ere long."

Edelfrida then enquired for Mr. Dormer; and Mrs. Conway, ſaying he was well,

well, aſſured her he would be very happy in the intelligence ſhe ſhould convey to him on her return home—" Not," ſaid ſhe, " that your ſituation is painful, or " embarraſſing: in that, Dormer, more " feelingly than perhaps any man " living, will participate; though he " will wiſh with me, that all your diſtreſs " may be quickly at an end; and he " will rejoice with me that we are ſo " ſoon to have our amiable friend all " to ourſelves—that is the intelligence " which will make him happy." " You " are both too good to me," returned Edelfrida. " We ſeek our own grati- " fication in any little attentions to " you," ſaid Mrs. Conway, who now roſe to take leave: " remember Mon- " day, at twelve o'clock," added ſhe; " till then, adieu." Edelfrida conducted her to the top of the ſtairs; then retired again to her room, cheered by her viſit, and by the proſpect of eſcaping for a time the torment of living

under

under the ſame roof with Lady Dudley, and being ſubject to Lady Wilford's contempt. The loſs of Maria's ſociety ſhe muſt ever regret; but ſhe conſidered that it was not likely ſhe could be of much uſe to her or Mandeville; as their affairs muſt neceſſarily remain in the ſame poſture, till ſome change took place in the minds of one or other of the parties.

She reflected on Mrs. Conway's friendſhip with a ſatisfaction ſhe had long been a ſtranger to: it promiſed her ſome conſolation in the midſt of all her afflictions; and though ſhe had not ventured to ſpeak on the ſubject neareſt her heart to that lady, yet ſhe felt herſelf ſoothed by her kindneſs, on every other. "How "deſtitute," ſaid ſhe, "of all truth "are Lady Wilford's malicious inſinu-"ations! I am convinced Mrs. Con-"way is ſuperior to all little arts: that "ſhe is generous, feeling, and humane,

"her

" her goodneſs to me plainly evinces;
" for what can ſhe expect in return,
" but a gratitude, which has not power
" to ſerve her in the moſt trifling de-
" gree?" Theſe thoughts occupied the mind of Edelfrida, till Miſs Dudley returned home.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISS Dudley, immediately on her return, ſent up to Edelfrida's room, having been anxious and uneaſy during the time of her abſence, on account of the ſtate ſhe left her in. She found her reſting her head on her hand, in a thoughtful and penſive poſition; and enquired as ſhe opened the door, in an accent of tenderneſs, how ſhe felt herſelf. "Better, my dear," replied Edelfrida, ſmiling: "I have had a phy-
"ſician here ſince you left me; and I
"find much benefit from the preſcrip-
"tion." "From whatever cauſe it
"proceeds," ſaid Maria, "I am happy
"to find you ſo much recovered; but
"pray, tell me who this phyſician is,
"that has been ſo ſucceſsful in admi-
"niſtering

" niſtering to your diſorder." " Mrs. " Conway," returned Edelfrida, " it is " to whom I owe the alteration you " obſerve: ſhe came in a happy hour " for me; you were gone, and I was " juſt reviving." She then gave Miſs Dudley a detail of what had paſſed between them, mentioning with gratitude the invitation ſhe had received. Maria was not ſo ſelfiſh to repine at the loſs of her ſociety, when it appeared that ſhe would reap no ſmall advantage from the propoſed excurſion; on the contrary, ſhe was truly glad to have her eſcape from the perſecution ſhe was then expoſed to, and was almoſt as grateful to Mrs. Conway as Edelfrida herſelf. " Now tell me," ſaid the latter, " where you have been this morning: " it is ſo unuſual a thing for Lady Dud- " ley to go out ſo early, and ſtay ſo " long." " You will be ſurpriſed " when I tell you we have been at Sir " James Wilford's all this time," replied

plied Maria. " When my mother " ſent for me into her dreſſing-room, it " was to inform me that my father as " well as herſelf were uneaſy at the " breach which appeared to be widen- " ing in their family; ſhe therefore in- " ſiſted that I ſhould go with her to my " ſiſter, and ſubmit to be reconciled to " her. " If," ſaid ſhe, " you fancy " yourſelf offended, you have already " ſhewn reſentment enough: I ſhall not " aſk you to beg Lady Wilford's par- " don, though I think you ought " to do ſo; but I expect that you " ſubſcribe to the conditions I ſhall " propoſe for a mutual accommoda- " tion." I replied that I ſhould cer- " tainly attend her to Sir James Wil- " ford's; and that, as my father and ſhe " made a point of it, I ſhould not he- " ſitate about the reconciliation, pro- " vided my ſiſter did not expect any " apology from me; that I felt myſelf in- " jured, and would not therefore ſubmit

" to

" to any undue humiliation. " Your
" pride is very ready to take alarm,"
" replied my mother, " on ſome occa-
" ſions, it might be better if it was
" directed to others, Ma'am." To
" this ſpeech I made no anſwer; but
" ſaid I would go and prepare myſelf,
" againſt the carriage was ready."

" We ſoon after ſet out, and found her
" Ladyſhip and Miſs Wilford at break-
" faſt: they looked ſurpriſed to ſee me
" enter, but drew up, and were ama-
" zingly ſtately; I ſeated myſelf quietly,
" leaving my mother to open the buſi-
" neſs. " Dear Ma'am," exclaimed
" my ſiſter, " what brings you out
" ſo early?" " Why, Caroline," re-
" plied my mother, " the manner in
" which you left us laſt night, has hurt
" both your father and myſelf; I have
" therefore brought Miſs Dudley, hoping
" to accommodate matters between you."
" I am afraid that wo'nt be eaſily ac-

" compliſhed

" compliſhed," returned her Ladyſhip " haughtily. " Miſs Dudley is not to " ſuppoſe I ſhall ſubmit to her humour, " for I aſſure her I ſhall not; and with- " out that, I preſume we can never be " friends." " Indeed," ſaid I, " your " Ladyſhip has not purſued the method " to create any great friendſhip between " us, though we are ſiſters: in order, " however, to gratify the juſt and rea- " ſonable wiſhes of our father and mo- " ther, I am willing to bury the paſt " in oblivion, on condition that you " do not think proper to interfere where " I alone am concerned." " You may " depend upon it, Ma'am," replied ſhe, " that I ſhall give myſelf no farther " trouble about you or your concerns." " Caroline," exclaimed my mother " warmly, " will you not then concede " in the ſmalleſt degree, to oblige your " father and me? From you I expected " ſome conſideration; but, if this is " the caſe, I only attempt in vain to

mediate;

" mediate; yet, unleſs you mean to
" ſever yourſelf entirely from us, you
" will now ſhew your ſuperiority by for-
" getting all animoſities." She looked
" prodigious ſullen during this addreſs;
" but at length replied, " Well, Ma'am,
" to oblige you and my father, I will
" endeavour to forget how much I
" have been inſulted." " And I will
" endeavour to forget how much I have
" been injured," ſaid I in return to
" this gracious condeſcenſion. " I
" won't have a word more ſaid on the
" ſubject," cried my mother: " both,
" promiſe me never to renew it." We
" both complied; but neither with a
" good grace. My mother then ſaid,
" You will dine with us to-day, Caro-
" line; and Sir James and Miſs Wil-
" ford, I hope too." " Not to-day,
" Ma'am," replied both ladies, to my
" great ſatisfaction; " to-morrow, if
" you pleaſe." " To-morrow then let it
" be," replied LadyDudley. Theſe mat-

ters

" ters thus adjuſted, a little general con-
" verſation enſued; but an univerſal
" awkwardneſs prevailing, I was very
" well pleaſed when my mother bid me
" ring to order the coach up to the
" door. At parting, my ſiſter and I
" gave each other a cold ſalute on our
" cheeks; we then came away. My
" mother is now in a better humour
" than I have ſeen her of ſome time;
" ſo that, if you feel yourſelf able to
" come down to dinner, I wiſh you
" would."

Edelfrida then, ever ready to comply with any requeſt of Maria's, immediately ſet about making herſelf fit to appear; and, when dinner was ready, ſhe went down with her friend. Sir Edward ſeemed leſs reſerved than in the morning; and her Ladyſhip did not ſay a croſs word to any perſon during the whole time of dinner, which was a remarkable inſtance of good-humour in

her, as ſhe generally ſcolded the ſervants moſt unmercifully; a practiſe in which her daughter Lady Wilford copied her with great ſucceſs. Edelfrida could ſcarcely ſwallow a morſel; yet ſhe endeavoured to preſerve her compoſure, that ſhe might not interrupt the calm which ſo ſeldom prevailed in the family parties of which ſhe made one unwillingly at all times, particularly now, when ſhe found herſelf an object of ſuch great and unabating diſpleaſure; for, though there was more general harmony on this day, ſhe experienced all the mortification of neglect as uſual. In the evening ſhe ſummoned courage to ſay to her uncle, while Lady Dudley was out of the room, "I have pro-"miſed, Sir, to go for a ſhort time with "Mrs. Conway into the country, concluding that you would have no objection "to my abſence." "You are yourſelf the cauſe," replied he, "Edelfrida, "that I have any objection to your preſence

" ſence in my family: you perverſely
" reject the good fortune which courts
" your acceptance, and doom yourſelf
" to mortification and unhappineſs—but
" I do not mean to urge this matter
" further. I have given Mr. Martin
" your moſt unexpected refuſal, aſſuring
" him that my influence with you, at
" leaſt the influence I might have ſup-
" poſed I had with you, was exerted
" in vain, and that, if he found him-
" ſelf offended by your conduct, he
" was not to conſider me anſwerable
" for it. That he is offended, it is plain
" to diſcover; and the effects of his re-
" ſentment will light wholly on you;
" I adviſe you therefore to prepare
" yourſelf for them: but, as your de-
" fence is, I fear, but a very weak one,
" I think you are right to go into the
" country. Mrs. Conway is, I believe,
" an amiable woman, and to you ſhe
" may be a valuable friend; you have
" but few, I fancy, left." " Very few

 " indeed,

"indeed," ſaid Edelfrida burſting into tears: "but Heaven, I hope, will not "entirely abandon me." Sir Edward walked to a window; whether to conceal any emotion Edelfrida's grief had excited, or to mark his diſpleaſure by neglect, could not be diſtinguiſhed; for he ſoon after left the room: and when he returned to it, his features were compoſed, and ſolemn gravity was the expreſſion of his countenance. The reſt of the evening was ſpent at cards by Sir Edward and Lady Dudley before ſupper; after which, Edelfrida pleading a head-ach, ſoon retired. Maria, finding her in bed when ſhe came up ſtairs, juſt kiſſed her cheek, and wiſhed her a good night ere ſhe went to her own room. The firſt part of the night Edelfrida ſlept heavily; but towards morning ſhe grew reſtleſs, and all thoſe painful ideas which conſtantly floated in her mind, collected themſelves into one maſs of ſubſtantial miſery.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE next day, both Maria and Edelfrida foreſaw, would prove a very diſagreeable one, from the preſence of Lady Wilford and Miſs Wilford. As to Sir James, he was a mere cypher at all times, particularly when his lady was preſent, who took the trouble of talking both for herſelf and him; and, if by chance he gave his opinion upon any ſubject, it was almoſt ſure of being contradicted by her, ſo high an idea had ſhe of her own underſtanding and genius, and ſo moderate a one of every other perſon's: ſo that on religion, of which ſhe had really no knowledge, and for which ſhe had leſs reſpect; on politics, wherein ignorance and party ſpirit directed her; on books, in which ſhe was very little read; on matters of taſte of which ſhe had the falſeſt idea; on

faſhion, where ſhe always ran into a vulgar extreme, ſhe preſumed with an haughty confidence to decide; and, if in the courſe of converſation any one ventured to differ with her, her paſſions hurried her into language highly offenſive and unbecoming a woman. Such being her character, it was no wonder that the few friends accident had given her, in the courſe of her life, were quickly loſt by this overbearing inſolence of mind. Diſagreeable as Edelfrida expected to find the preſence of two people ſhe very much diſliked, and who ſhe knew hated her, ſhe yet determined they ſhould not ſuppoſe it was in their power to baniſh her; for which reaſon ſhe dreſſed herſelf early, and took her ſeat in the drawing-room ere they came. When they arrived, Lady Wilford appeared to be in tolerable good humour: ſhe and Miſs Wilford ſpoke to Edelfrida with apparent civility; but ſhe could eaſily obſerve that they were

enjoying

enjoying ſome fancied triumph over her. Careleſs, however, of their thoughts or ſentiments, ſhe felt no pain on that account, but purſued her work with an air of calm indifference. During dinner they threw out ſome hints, which ſhe could not but take to herſelf, though ſhe appeared not to underſtand them; by that means defeating the kind purpoſe for which they were uttered; malice loſing half its ſting, when the object at which it is levelled proves invulnerable. In the evening, they all played whiſt, except Edelfrida; but, though two of the party were always out, ſhe had very little converſation with any but Maria. Juſt before ſupper, when the cards were over, Lady Wilford ſaid to Sir Edward and Lady Dudley, "I hope you will ſpend the "day with us on Monday: I am to have "a ſmall party in the evening, but you "will have no objection to that." They ſaid they had none. "We ſhall ſee you,

Maria," turning to her ſiſter; then to Edelfrida, adding, "And you too. "I "am obliged to your Ladyſhip," replied Edelfrida, "but I am going out of "town on Monday." "Out of town!" repeated ſhe in a tone of ſurpriſe, "pray, is it impertinent to aſk where?" "'Tis no ſecret, Ma'am," ſaid Edelfrida; "I am going with Mrs. Conway to "Beech-grove, for a ſhort time." Miſs Wilford now looked ſignificantly at her ſiſter, who reſumed — "A "violent friendſhip has commenced "between you and Mrs. Conway, upon "my word, in a very ſhort time too. "Mr. Dormer is to be of the party, "I ſuppoſe."

"'Tis very probable he will," replied Edelfrida careleſsly. "Our friend "Martin," ſaid her Ladyſhip, applying to Sir James, "has ſome reaſon for his "diſlike, then, you find." "O yes, "it ſeems ſo," replied he with a vacant ſtare, intended for a look of ſagacity.

"So

" So the knight of woeful countenance,
" then, has faſcinated your ſenſes,
" Ma'am," ſaid Lady Wilford, laughing and looking full at Edelfrida. " I
" don't underſtand your Ladyſhip," replied ſhe. " Indeed!" cried Lady Wilford, ſtill ſtaring at her with a ſcornful grin on her countenance. " Well," added ſhe, " I wiſh you joy, child: you
" have made an excellent choice, it
" muſt be confeſſed." She then burſt into a loud laugh. " I am a ſtranger,
" Lady Wilford," ſaid Edelfrida, " to
" all cauſe of congratulation; and, if
" I have on any occaſion taken the
" liberty of chooſing between what I
" eſteem good and evil, is it not both
" cruel and unjuſt, firſt to load me
" with reproach, then treat me with
" contempt? Where I have erred, I
" am the ſufferer; 'tis fit I ſhould be
" ſo; my own feelings are always a ſuf-
" ficient puniſhment for any offence I
" have hitherto been guilty of: you

" may therefore ſpare me; and, if you " pleaſe, direct that mirth which is the " offſpring of a mind at eaſe, to ſome " other object." " I thank you for " your advice, Ma'am," returned her Ladyſhip with an haughty toſs of her head. The ſupper now put a ſtop to all further diſcourſe on this ſubject; nor was it renewed. Sir Edward took care to introduce more general ones; and the evening at length ended, to the great joy of Maria and Edelfrida. It was now Saturday night; and on Monday morning ſhe looked forward to a temporary releaſe, at leaſt, from her preſent vexations. Sunday paſſed off very quietly: ſhe and Miſs Dudley attended Sir Edward to church; and the remainder of the day they ſpent at home without any company; and Lady Dudley, conforming ſo far to what ſhe called a whim of Sir Edward's, forbore to play at cards; and therefore ſtaid in her own room the greateſt part of every Sunday.

Her

Her abſence left Maria and Edelfrida at liberty to enjoy one another's converſation uninterrupted, as on the following day they were to part for ſome time. They had a thouſand things to ſay relative to their ſeparate hopes and fears; and when at night they got up ſtairs together, it was late ere they could prevail on themſelves to go to bed. Since firſt they met, they had been conſtantly under the ſame roof; and the prepoſſeſſion they felt for each other at firſt, was new ſtrengthened into the moſt pure and animated friendſhip.

CHAPTER XXX.

EDELFRIDA roſe next morning with a lighter heart than uſual; and putting up the clothes ſhe meant to take with her, ſhe propoſed to dedicate the time which intervened between that and twelve o'clock to her beloved Maria. Sir Edward ſeemed, by degrees, to ſoften the aſperity of his manners towards her; and on this morning he appeared ſtill reſs reſerved: he talked to her of Mrs. Conway, of her excurſion and return to town, but never once mentioned Mr. Martin. Underſtanding ſhe was to go at twelve, when he roſe to quit the breakfaſt-room, he wiſhed her a pleaſant jaunt, and retired without any of that ſeverity in his aſpect which he had regarded her with for

ſome

ſome days paſt. A little revived by his returning kindneſs, Edelfrida was once more tolerably cheerful, and converſed with Maria, without thoſe painful ſenſations ſhe had experienced for a conſiderable time. They ſpoke of Mandeville; and Edelfrida promiſed, if ſhe ſaw or heard any thing of him, to write immediately. At the appointed hour Mrs. Conway ſtopped in her carriage at Sir Edward's door; and Edelfrida, embracing Maria, haſtened to join that lady, who inſtantly congratulated her on the improvement in her looks. At Hyde-Park corner, Dormer and Mandeville rode up to the carriage, and both eagerly enquired of Edelfrida how ſhe did, in accents of the tendereſt concern at having heard of her indiſpoſition. She learnt that they were to be hers and Mrs. Conway's eſcort with pleaſure, for they were both great favourites with her; and ſhe wiſhed to talk of

Maria

Maria to Mandeville, free from all reſtraint. After an agreeable ride, during which ſhe gave Mrs. Conway the particulars of all that had happened ſince ſhe laſt ſaw her, omitting only Lady Wilford's ill-natured hints reſpecting herſelf and Dormer, not thinking it delicate to mention them to his ſiſter, who was not acquainted with the fatal prepoſſeſſion ſhe nouriſhed for another, and might therefore have ſuppoſed ſhe would have had no objection to an union with Mr. Dormer, they arrived at Beech-grove, a ſmall but elegant box on the banks of the Thames, where they found every thing ready for their reception. Dormer handed Edelfrida into the houſe, and politely expreſſed the pleaſure he felt in ſeeing her there; Mandeville and Mrs. Conway followed; and they ſoon ſeated themſelves in a ſmall drawing-room, which commanded a moſt beautiful ſcene. "I hope," ſaid Dormer,

drawing

drawing his chair next to Edelfrida's, "I hope we ſhall quickly ſee that un-
"natural languor vaniſh from your fea-
"tures: I ſay unnatural, becauſe I am
"ſure it was never intended that me-
"lancholy ſhould ſeize you as its prey,
"and unmercifully feed upon the vi-
"vacity which is mixed in every qua-
"lity your character is compoſed of."
"Ah! you can't imagine," replied ſhe,
"what a low-ſpirited creature I am
"when any thing vexes me; I told
"Mrs. Conway what ſhe had to expect,
"when ſhe was ſo good to invite me."
"If it were indeed ſo," ſaid he ſighing,
"ſhe is very well accuſtomed to bear
"with creatures of that deſcription:
"but, I hope," he continued, "that
"there is an end of the perſecution that
"miſerable dog, Martin, has occaſioned
"you. How could Sir Edward poſſibly
"think of diſpoſing of you to ſuch a
"wretch?" "Sir Edward," returned ſhe,
"has not, I preſume, the ſame opinion

"of

" of him that you and I have; or elſe,
" I hope, he would not have urged it:
" but, though I can't flatter myſelf that
" there is an end of the diſtreſs I have
" ſuffered, I am reſolute in maintain-
" ing my diſlike, nor ſhall all the
" powers on earth ever tempt me to
" accept him." " If you did," replied Dormer, " and after having rejected
" him too, your exiſtence would be-
" come a burden to you; for it is im-
" poſſible for him to feel a real af-
" fection for any thing in this world
" except himſelf: neither has he honour
" and generoſity to forgive what he
" conceives to be an injury; once in
" his power, the unhappy victim of it
" would rue the hour which gave her
" being, and curſe the fate which
" united her to ſuch a monſter." " You
" make me ſhudder," cried Edelfrida,
" by the picture you have drawn of
" him; Heaven defend me from his
" power then!" " Heaven, I hope, will,"

ſaid

ſaid he; "and, for that purpoſe, it has "implanted in your nature thoſe ſtrong "averſions which are difficult to over-"come, as a guard againſt the preci-"pitancy of your diſpoſition and the "timidity of your ſex: the one might "otherwiſe hurry you into actions you "would all your life repent; the other "might be terrified into compliance "with the wiſhes of your family." "I "have great reaſon then," replied ſhe, "to be grateful to nature for having "given me a certain degree of ſtability, "to counteract the lighter diſpoſitions "ſhe has created in me; for, could I "have been terrified, perſuaded, or "hurried into this hateful match, I am "certain none of theſe methods would "have been left untried: but they knew "I was obſtinate, and that it was in vain "they attempted to alter my reſolution." "It was happy for you that they did "know it," ſaid he; for by that means

you

" you have eſcaped more pain than " you have ſuffered; though that, I ſee, " has not been inconſiderable." " In- " deed, it has not," returned ſhe. Dinner having been ordered at four o'clock, it was now ready; and Edelfrida was conducted into the dining parlour, where every thing wore the ſame face of neatneſs and elegance, as in the other parts of the houſe: and this repaſt, to which ſhe ſat down with more inclination to partake of it, than ſhe had felt for many weeks, went off in the moſt tranquil and pleaſant manner. At ten Mandeville took an opportunity of enquiring minutely into Maria's health, ſpirits, and diſpoſition towards himſelf; to all which enquiry he received from their mutual friend very ſatisfactory accounts, which gave him ſpirits to accompany her when ſhe ſat down to to the piano-forte. After ten they played, and Edelfrida ſung till ſupper-time; and the reſt of the evening was

ſpent

ſpent in the moſt ſociable and cheerful ſtyle. Could Edelfrida have baniſhed from her mind thoſe painful recollections which corrode all happineſs, ſhe was now in a ſituation to have enjoyed much: the friends in whoſe houſe ſhe was, were very partial to her; and their diſpoſitions and manners were exactly calculated to pleaſe a taſte refined as hers was. Mrs. Conway ſhe found the moſt feminine and engaging woman in the world: ſhe was well informed, ſenſible, and perfectly unaffected; generous and delicate in her ideas, and warmly affectionate in her friendſhip. Dormer too appeared to great advantage in his own houſe, where he was perfectly a gentleman, never forgetting the attention due to his gueſts; yet, not in the leaſt troubleſome or officious in his civilities, which ſeemed rather the reſult of good-nature, than the effect of acquired politeneſs. Moſt of the neighbouring houſes were yet unoccupied,

the

the families being ſtill in town; ſo that the little party at Beech-grove had their time to themſelves. In the morning Edelfrida rode on horſeback, attended by the gentlemen; ſhe was too weak and languid to bear walking exerciſe. Mrs. Conway, therefore, inſiſted upon her riding. On their return one of the gentlemen read, while the ladies worked; and after tea, muſic was always intrduced. In this manner ſeveral days paſſed calmly and pleaſantly away. Edelfrida, revived by the change, from diſcord in St. James's Square, to tranquillity and a pure air in the country, ſuffered herſelf for the firſt week to be diverted from her own uneaſy reflections. Dormer too ſeemed leſs thoughtful; nor had he ever once hinted at the extraordinary exclamation which had eſcaped him, on the evening which Edelfrida played and ſung to him in London.

At the end of ten days Mandeville left Beech-grove: he was obliged to be

in

in town, his military duty requiring his preſence there. Edelfrida had written to Maria more than once during this time, and received from her letters, which ſhe was in part to communicate to Mandeville; a gratification he could not expect when in London. With reluctance, therefore, he departed; and with regret his friends ſaw him go. Maria ſaid little in her letters about her own uncomfortable ſituation, or of any report concerning Edelfrida or Mr. Martin; but her ſtyle was dejected and melancholy; and her friend became apprehenſive that ſhe paſſed lightly over diſagreeable events, in compaſſion to her feelings. This idea, together with thoſe never to be baniſhed remembrances of the too well beloved Henry Evelyne, inſenſibly ſtole from Edelfrida the power of exertion, and the ſhort gleam of content her countenance had lately expreſſed: ſhe ſighed ſo frequently, and ſo heavily, that Mrs. Conway at length

took

took notice of it, ſaying, " I fear the " letters you receive are not calculated to " reſtore either your health or ſpirits." " All the letters I have had ſince I " came," replied Edelfrida, " are from " Maria; and though I can perceive that " ſhe is even more unhappy than when " I left her, ſhe carefully avoids entering " into the cauſe of it, in tenderneſs to " my feelings; and for the ſame reaſon, " ſhe ſcarcely mentions that wretch " Martin." " So then, my dear," returned Mrs. Conway, " you determine " ingeniouſly to conjure up a train of " diſmal images to torment yourſelf " with, becauſe Miſs Dudley has given " you no real occaſion of uneaſineſs." " Indeed, my dear Ma'am," ſaid Edelfrida, " I ſincerely wiſh I could per- " ſuade myſelf that my vexations, not " to call them griefs, were only ima- " ginary; that is a ſubject on which I " am ſure I ſhould be open to convic- " tion: but, alas!" added ſhe ſighing,

" who

" who can teach me to be happy, in
" defiance of that unequivocal miſery
" which has encompaſſed my heart?
" Believe me, it is not that I fancy my-
" ſelf wretched; but that I am ſo, be-
" yond all expreſſon to paint." " I
" know, and lament, my amiable friend,"
replied Mrs. Conway, " that your ſitu-
" ation in Sir Edward Dudley's houſe
" is very far indeed from being a deſi-
" rable one; but, young and endowed
" as you are, there is but little reaſon
" to ſuppoſe that you may not very
" ſoon have it in your power to chooſe
" another more conſonant to your incli-
" nation and comfort: do not, there-
" fore, ſuffer an evil which cannot be
" of long duration to prey thus upon
" your ſpirits, and make you miſerable.
" And, as to Mr. Martin's reſentment,
" of that I think you need entertain
" very little fear: he will not dare to
" take any liberties with your name,
" I am certain he will not; he values

" his

"his own perſonal ſafety too highly;
"and he knows that you have friends
"who might chaſtiſe his inſolence. I
"am convinced you have too much
"ſenſe and ſpirit, to make an affliction
"of this beyond the moment. What
"then am I to imagine is the ſecret
"cauſe of your determined grief? Your
"heart, you ſay, is encompaſſed by
"miſery. Ah! Edelfrida, pardon me
"if I ſuſpect that it has been too ſuſ-
"ceptible already for its miſtreſs's
"peace; but where then can be the
"author of its wound? can he be in-
"ſenſible to the pain he has inflicted?
"I ſhould think ital moſt impoſſible.
"Can any man coldly abandon a con-
"queſt, which he could never have ob-
"tained without danger and difficulty,
"I am certain?" While Mrs. Conway
ſpoke, Edelfrida grew red and pale, but
attempted not to interrupt her; and,
when ſhe ceaſed, her emotion would not
ſuffer her to reply of ſome minutes:

then

then, making an effort, ſhe ſaid, " Do " you not think that the diſmal pro- " ſpects I have before me, united to " my preſent embarraſſments, furniſh " me with too much reaſon for being " unhappy, without ſeeking further for " a cauſe? Why ſhould you imagine " that I have fooliſhly diſpoſed of my " affections, without ſtipulating for a " return?" She attempted to ſmile, as ſhe uttered this; but Mrs. Conway was not to be deceived; ſhe ſhook her head with a look of incredulity, which Edelfrida felt as a reproach for her duplicity; and fixing her eyes on the carpet, ſhe remained ſilent for a conſiderable time: then, raiſing her head, ſhe exclaimed, " You ſhall, my dear Madam, " read, if you pleaſe, the moſt ſecret " thoughts of my heart: you have " too truly gueſſed that there is yet " an undiſcovered ſource of miſery in " it, which renders all other evils light " and trivial in the compariſon." " I

" have had too many opportunities," replied Mrs. Conway, " of remarking " the ſymptoms of an unhappy paſſion, " to be now miſtaken in them: I ſuſ- " pected that my ſweet friend was the " victim of that corroding diſeaſe; I " I ſaw that your heart was pierced, " but I hoped, not too deeply for a per- " fect cure." " It is pierced," cried Edelfrida, " beyond the power of time " or human ſkill to cure. Alas! where " ſhall I find patience to endure it?" A violent paſſion of tears here burſt from her eyes; and Mrs. Conway, alarmed and melted by her diſtreſs, ſeverely repented having introduced the ſubject. When Edelfrida had relieved her full boſom by the indulgence of weeping, ſhe became once more compoſed, and proceeded to tell Mrs. Conway the ſecret of her heart. That lady, out of tenderneſs to her, objected to the recital; but Edelfrida aſſured her, that though a fatal one,

one, yet ſtill it was a gratification to her to pour out her ſorrows to a friend: with ſimple and unaffected grace then ſhe told the unhappy tale, bluſhing at the mention of thoſe hours of paſt felicity ſhe had enjoyed; and growing pale again, as ſhe ſpoke of his deſertion and extraordinary conduct in Kenſington-Gardens the morning Mrs. Conway had conveyed her thither to meet Mandeville. "In-"deed, my dear," ſaid that lady, when Edelfrida had concluded, "I can-"not perſuade myſelf that there is "not ſome miſtake which might be "cleared up between you, if you would "ſubmit to it." "I am too well "aſſured there can be none," returned Edelfrida; "and I can never conſent to "ſue for an affection which was once "voluntarily offered me, and withdrawn "without cauſe. No, my dear Mrs. "Conway, my pride will not allow "me to accept any accommodation,

" however wtetched for life I muſt be
" in an eternal ſeparation from him."
" If you are fixed in that reſolution,"
replied Mrs. Conway, " I can only
" hope that your good Genius will
" interpoſe, and ſave you both; for 'tis
" plain that he relinquiſhes you as re-
" luctantly as you do him: and, now
" that we are on this melancholy theme,
" and Dormer is abſent, I will tell you
" a ſhort hiſtory of him and his misfor-
" tunes, which will make even your
" own lot appear at leaſt leſs wretched."
" I feared," ſaid Edelfrida, ſighing
from the bottom of her heart, " I
" feared Mr. Dormer was not happy;
" his ſudden emotion on the evening
" of the day I ſpent with you in town,
" together with what he ſaid to me as
" we walked down ſtairs, convinced me
" his feelings had received a ſevere
" ſhock." " A ſhock," returned Mrs.
Conway, " that he will never recover;
" as you will confeſs, when you have
" heard

" heard what he has endured: and that
" he merited a better fate, his virtue
" and benevolence are worthy proofs,
" which daily preſent themſelves to his
" friends."

CHAPTER XXXI.

"IT is now twelve years," continued Mrs. Conway, "ſince accident in-
"troduced my brother to a family, in
"which there was in particular one
"young lady who inſtantly attracted
"his attention; ſhe was ſcarcely fifteen
"when he became acquainted with her,
"but poſſeſſed of beauties both of
"mind and perſon which won his affec-
"tions: he was at that time a lieu-
"tenant in the navy, young, handſome,
"lively and engaging, of an ardent
"and generous temper, and ſuſceptible
"of the moſt animated and laſting im-
"preſſions. The lady, whom you'll
"excuſe me if I only call by her Chriſ-
"tian name Louiſa, was not leſs pleaſed

"with

" with her young lover, than he ap-
" peared to be with her; and a mutual
" attachment took place between them
" ere her family ſaw, or pretended to
" ſee it. They were all Roman Ca-
" tholics; but Charles would not liſten
" to any of the objections which might
" have been raiſed to his union with
" Louiſa. They were, however, both
" too young to marry; and he conſented
" to go again to ſea, ere their marriage
" took place. On theſe conditions, my
" mother reluctantly conſented to his
" connexion with a woman of a diffe-
" rent religion. He ſailed at the ap-
" pointed time, and left Louiſa with her
" parents, together with an elder ſiſter,
" who ſoon after married advantageouſly
" to a Catholic baronet. One brother
" and another ſiſter were in France;
" the former deſtined for a prieſt, the
" latter doomed to the cloiſter. The
" family, though ancient, were far from
" rich, and this was their only means

" of providing for their children. Lou-
" iſa's beauty having ſecured my bro-
" ther, ſhe was then reſcued from per-
" petual impriſonment. Scarcely was
" the elder ſiſter's wedding celebrated,
" ere their father was ſeized with a
" fever which threatened his life, and in
" fine put an end to it; and alſo to
" their mother's, who caught the diſ-
" order by attending on her huſband.
" This calamitous change in the family
" was the fatal cauſe of the evils which
" have overwhelmed my poor Charles.
" Louiſa, inſtead of going to her mar-
" ried ſiſter, was taken by a gentleman
" whoſe wife was a diſtant relation of
" hers, and who was appointed her
" guardian, till my brother's return
" home. Gracious Heaven! that ſuch
" a wretch ſhould ever have been en-
" truſted with the innocent unhappy
" girl who ſuſpected not the ſnares he
" artfully laid to deſtroy her peace of
" mind for ever. Her extreme youth

" and

" and beauty captivated his depraved
" and ſavage heart; and in the end he
" compelled her to the guilty ſacrifice
" of her honour, and with it all thoſe fond
" and flattering hopes of happineſs ſhe
" had entertained in the promiſed union
" with my brother. Her ſhame, un-
" fortunate creature, became at length
" too viſible to eſcape the obſervation
" of the villain's wife, who languiſhed
" in ſilent miſery for a ſhort time; then
" died of a broken heart, leaving
" Louiſa the helpleſs victim of her mur-
" derer's power: he, alarmed at her
" condition, fearing public diſgrace,
" though he had defied the whiſpers of
" conſcience, and all the ties of honour,
" confidence, and hoſpitality, reſolved
" to complete her deſtruction, by mar-
" rying him to a wretch even more de-
" ſpicable than himſelf, if poſſible.
" A Roman Catholic prieſt, a creature
" whom he could command, conſented
" to perform the ceremony; to which

" the hapleſs Louiſa was dragged, ſhriek-
" ing with agony. Deaf to her cries,
" and inſenſible to her wrongs, they
" proceeded to make her the wife of
" a man ſhe had ſcarcely ſeen before,
" and who was bought to ſhield her be-
" trayer from infamy. A commiſſion
" in the army, with other valuable pre-
" ſents, were the price at which the in-
" human guardian got quit of his now
" troubleſome ward. She had nearly
" rid herſelf and him of a burden too
" heavy to endure, by death. She lay
" ſenſeleſs for a length of time; but at
" laſt recovered to all the horrors of
" her fate, and was delivered of a boy,
" the offspring of diſgrace and miſery.
" After this event ſhe ſunk into a pro-
" found melancholy; and her huſband
" being ordered abroad, and ſhe in no
" condition to accompany him, was
" once more left to the mercy of her
" cruel and remorſeleſs enemy, in whoſe
" houſe ſhe languiſhed out her days in
" ſorrow.

" ſorrow. Mean time it was reported,
" and the report reached our ears, that
" ſhe had abandoned herſelf to guilt,
" and married the object of her ſhame-
" leſs paſſion. This intelligence, you
" may be ſure, greatly ſurpriſed and
" afflicted us; and my mother wrote to
" the faithleſs guardian, to demand, in
" her ſon's name, the truth of what we
" had heard. He replied to her letter in
" terms of well-expreſſed ſorrow for the
" conduct of his ward; with affected
" reluctance, confirming our fears; and
" declaring that compaſſion alone in-
" duced him to offer her an aſylum in
" his houſe, while the huſband ſhe had
" ſo unworthily choſen was abſent from
" England. He added, that ſhe appeared
" penitent for the crime ſhe had commit-
" ted; and he hoped ſhe would hereaf-
" ter be forgiven: though it was impoſ-
" ſible we ſhould endure to think of her
" without horror and reſentment, he
" conjured us, however, to mix ſome

" pity with our contempt of the unhappy
" fallen creature, and ſuffer her to ſpend
" her days in an uninterrupted pennance
" for her offences." " Let not Mr.
" Dormer," ſaid he, " ſeek to puniſh
" her by expoſing his life to the haſard
" of a duel, ſhould he ever encounter the
" partner of her guilt: they are now both
" below his indignation." Thus did he
" artfully throw the blame upon the
" much-injured Louiſa, and rendered
" her in our eyes a wretch whoſe name
" we never more uttered till Charles re-
" turned back to us. My mother had
" ſent a letter to him; but, doubtful of
" its ever reaching him, ſhe had only
" endeavoured to prepare him for the
" fatal intelligence ſhe had to commu-
" nicate, by diſtant hints of it. He had
" received it, and was greatly alarmed by
" its contents; therefore, the moment
" he could diſengage himſelf from the
" buſineſs of his profeſſion, he hurried
" down into the country to us, to learn

" a full

" a full account of the particulars which
" threatened his happineſs. We ſaw
" him enter the houſe breathleſs, with
" impatience to hear his fate. Our ſen-
" ſations are not to be deſcribed: you
" may conceive they were dreadful."
" Dreadful indeed," replied Edelfrida,
the tears ſtreaming from her eyes.
" He embraced us," reſumed Mrs.
" Conway; then, leading my mother
" with trembling anxiety to a ſeat, he
" placed himſelf by her, and earneſtly
" beſought her to relieve him from the
" rack of ſuſpenſe on which her letter
" had bound all his faculties." " Pain-
" ful is the taſk, my ſon," ſaid ſhe,
" which you enjoin me; yet, to give you
" eaſe, I will attempt to perform it."
" Fearful prelude!" he exclaimed,
" Oh! whither does it lead? My ſoul
" ſhrinks with dread at the evils which
" await me; but go on, my deareſt
" mother, go on, and let me hear the
" worſt: only firſt ſay, does my Louiſa
" live?

" live?" " She does, I believe," re-
" plied my mother." " She cannot be
" unfaithful," cried he; " what then
" have I to fear?" " Alas!" ſaid my
" mother, " we deceive ourſelves, when
" we place too great a dependence on
" human ſtability and human happineſs:
" arm yourſelf, my dear Charles, againſt
" the miſery this unhappy girl has invol-
" ved herſelf in, andwhich, if you indulge
" it, will overwhelm you." He threw
" his arm acroſs the back of a chair,
" and, reclining his head on it, ſeemed
" buried in thought for ſome minutes;
" then, ſtarting from this attitude, he
" uttered in the moſt heart-piercing
" accents, " I am calm, Madam, I
" am ready to liſten to the ſequel of
" my ruin: Louiſa lives, you ſay;
" for whom does ſhe live, if not for
" me?" " She has proved herſelf un-
" worthy your tenderneſs," reſumed
" my mother; " ſhe has forgotten what
" it is to feel the peace of innocence,

" or

" or the pride of virtue." He fixed
" his eyes on my mother, as ſhe ſpoke
" to him, with an expreſſion in them I
" never ſhall forget; then, in a voice
" half-ſmothered with contending emo-
" tions, he ſaid, " Is ſhe abandoned?
" Louiſa, my Louiſa, abandoned to in-
" famy! Did you mean to ſay that?
" Oh! horrible falſhood!" he added,
" burſting into a loud and convulſive
" laugh. We now looked upon each other
" in diſmay, fearing his intellects had
" fallen a ſacrifice to the ſhock; but
" happily this frightful laugh termina-
" ted in the moſt impaſſioned agony of
" tears: we were however thankful to ſee
" him weep, even though they were the
" bittereſt drops of ſorrow which ever
" fell from human eyes. When he had
" exhauſted this ſource of relief to his
" burſting heart, he ſunk down, una-
" ble to combat any longer with his
" griefs. My mother then ordered
" our ſervants to carry him up to his
" room,

" room, which he quietly ſuffered them
" to do: we followed, and ſat by his bed
" till the apothecary, a man of whoſe
" ſkill we had an high opinion, came.
" Charles, mean time, lay with his
" eyes fixed, and his whole body mo-
" tionleſs, regardleſs of our affliction.
" When Mr. Peters came, he ſaid he
" could not perceive any alarming
" ſymptoms; but that the violent agita-
" tion of a mind naturally warm and im-
" petuous, would without doubt greatly
" diſorder the whole frame: for which
" reaſon, he adviſed us to quit the
" room, and that he would ſtay in it,
" till ſome favourable alteration took
" place. We told him the cauſe of
" this unhappy ſituation, in which he
" found my brother, for he was an old
" friend of our family; and having no
" ſcruple to truſt him, we imagined
" he could find out a remedy better,
" when he knew the cauſe. During
" the time of our baniſhment from the
" apartment

" apartment of our poor invalid, my
" mother and I ſat lamenting the hour
" which brought him acquainted with
" the much-injured, but then condemn-
" ed Louiſa—the bane of our domeſtic
" peace. Charles continued ill all that
" night; and my mother preſſed
" Mr. Peters repeatedly to let her
" ſend for a phyſician; but he as
" repeatedly aſſured her, there was no
" occaſion: and about noon, next day,
" we rejoiced at a meſſage to go into
" his room, for that he was better, and
" wiſhed to ſee us; we obeyed the
" ſummons immediately, and found
" him ſitting up in bed, pale, and low
" indeed, but apparently compoſed.
" We ſat down, one on each ſide of
" him; and taking hold of my mother's
" hand, and then of mine, he alter-
" nately preſſed them to his lips, ſay-
" ing, " My dear mother, and my
" dear Fanny, forgive me, if in the
" wildneſs of my grief I doubted the

" fatal

" fatal truth of what you told me;
" conclude then the melancholy tale,
" for I would know the extent of my
" misfortune." " When you are a
" little more recovered, my dear
" Charles," ſaid my mother, fearful
" of a relapſe, " then I will tell you the
" whole." " If you do not wiſh to
" torture me," cried he impatiently,
" tell me now; for I muſt know to
" what accurſed chance I owe the
" ruin of my peace. Could ſhe whom
" I left innocent as angels, pure as
" heaven, could ſhe fall, without a
" combination of helliſh circumſtances
" had conſpired againſt her? Say,
" what execrable villain has undone
" her?"—When he pauſed, my mother
" gave him a ſuccinct account of what
" I have related to you; then put the
" the inſidious letter into his hand,
" which trembled as he held it. " Then
" all is over," exclaimed he, letting
" it fall, and ſinking back on his pillow,

" with

" with a countenance whereon the
" moſt ghaſtly deſpair was written.—
" From this period, which I cannot
" recollect withont ſhuddering, he was
" by turns diſtracted with paſſion, or
" abſorbed in melancholy: a moſt
" alarming fever enſued; and, during
" the delirium, he raved inceſſantly of
" Louiſa, and denounced vengeance
" on her huſband, her deſtroyer, and
" his eternal enemy. For many weeks
" we deſpaired of his life; and when
" our apprehenſion for that ſubſided,
" we dreaded an habitual dejection,
" which he appeared falling faſt into.
" It was a very conſiderable time ere,
" after he was out of danger, he could
" move, he was ſo weak, and his nerves
" were ſo ſhattered; and during this
" time an account arrived of the death
" of Louiſa's huſband: this was cau-
" tiouſly mentioned to him, in hopes of
" rouſing him from the lethargy of ſor-
" row which had ſeized on his ſpirits.

" It

" It had in ſome reſpects the deſired
" effect: it called forth anew the vio-
" lence of his reſentment; and he la-
" mented in the bittereſt terms the op-
" portunity he had loſt of revenging
" himſelf on the wretch who had con-
" tributed to his miſeries. Once awa-
" kened from the ſtupefaction into
" which he had been plunged, he re-
" ſolved to go again to ſea; the ſhip to
" which he belonged, was then fitting
" out; and my mother, hoping he would
" recover his tranquillity, made no
" objection. Preparations were then
" ſet about for his departure; and
" much as we regretted the neceſſity of
" parting with him, we ſaw no other
" cure for the malady which preyed
" on his life and ſpirits; for though he
" thought Louiſa undeſerving his af-
" fection, he could not withdraw it from
" her. The habit of viewing every
" thing through the medium of diſguſt,
" now ſeized on his temper, naturally

" one

" one of the ſweeteſt in the world; but,
" from this unfortunate period of his
" life, he judged both men and their
" actions with ſeverity. Our ſex too
" became in his eyes, what they have
" too frequently been painted, light,
" inconſtant, and worthleſs; for, to this
" hour, he knows not that Louiſa did
" not voluntarily abandon herſelf to the
" moſt diſgraceful union. How I came
" to be otherwiſe informed, you ſhall
" be acquainted, in the courſe of my
" recital. An unſocial diſpoſition grew
" upon him by degrees; and that ſin-
" gularity of manners which every
" body obſerves, became in ſome mea-
" ſure his characteriſtic; his honour,
" his generoſity, his humanity, and
" his integrity, remained however un-
" tainted: notwithſtanding that, he
" appeared a perfect miſanthrope, to
" the generality of people.

" About a fortnight previous to his
" leaving England once more, when

" he

" he was in the frame of mind I have
" attempted to deſcribe to you, a let-
" ter was brought to him one morning,
" while he was ſitting, leaning on my
" chair, thoughtful, but reſigned to the
" gloomy colour of his deſtiny. I watch-
" ed his countenance, as he read the di-
" rection; and I ſaw it change inſtanta-
" neouſly, from a ſullen compoſure, to
" the moſt terrifying fierceneſs: he held
" the letter in his hand, and ſeemed to
" mutter ſomething, but too indiſtinct-
" ly to be heard: then throwing it from
" him, as he would have caſt away an
" envenomed reptile, he exclaimed,
" She purſues me, to madneſs." Utter-
" ing this, he walked diſtractedly about
" the room for many minutes; whilſt
" I, dreadfully alarmed, neither durſt
" leave him, nor yet did I wiſh to wit-
" neſs his deſpair. Inſenſibly he became
" calm once again; then pointing to the
" letter, which lay on the floor, at the
" other end of the room, he ſaid,

" Read

"read it, Fanny: the characters imprint-
"ed on it will not blaſt your ſight, as
"they have done mine." I fearfully
"took it up, and broke the ſeal; but
"I had not peruſed half the contents,
"ere tears obſtructed my ſight, and I
"laid it down, to indulge the grief it
"had created."

Here Mrs. Conway paùſed; and going to a drawer in her writing-table, ſhe took out a pocket-book, which contained this melancholy letter: then preſenting it to Edelfrida, ſhe ſaid, "Read it yourſelf, my ſympathiſing "friend; this is a copy in which I "have only omitted the names of the "parties." Edelfrida, who was deeply affected by what ſhe had heard, yet felt impatient for the concluſion, took the letter, and found it what Mrs. Conway had deſcribed: it was addreſſed to Mr. Dormer; and in the following terms it was expreſſed.

The Letter.

" IF a wretch more unfortunate than
" guilty may preſume to preſs upon
" the attention of the moſt injured
" and moſt lamented of mankind, her
" ſorrows, and her laſt humble, though
" earneſt requeſt; I, the victim of a
" fate too ſevere for the mind or the
" body long to ſuſtain, I may thus ap-
" proach you, Dormer, ſevered from
" you by the ruthleſs hand of tyranny.
" My ſoul has anxiouſly ſought a reſt-
" ing place, in a ſeparation from a body
" rendered hateful in my own eyes, and
" deſpicable in the eyes of every other
" being on the earth. How rendered
" ſo, ſhall hereafter be known, when
" the cold grave affords me a ſhelter;
" a ſhelter I have hitherto prayed for
" in vain, in thoſe intervals of reaſon
" which I have been condemned to ex-
" perience—I ſay condemned; for who,

" that

" that could form an idea of my con-
" dition, would not think madneſs a
" bleſſing? Will you not ſay that ſhe
" who could relinquiſh her promiſed
" union with you, who could repay
" your generous affection with perfidy
" and ingratitude, deſerves her fate,
" let it be the moſt complicated wretch-
" edneſs? You think me guilty, Dor-
" mer; but I call the ſacred powers of
" heaven to witneſs, that, at the mo-
" ment when I was compelled to give
" you up for ever, all my hopes of
" happineſs were centered in you; every
" ſentiment of my heart bound me to
" you; nor can the tie ever be broken
" while I continue to exiſt, and continue
" to be conſcious of that exiſtence.
" This is the only hour ſince our fatal
" ſeparation, in which I durſt venture
" to addreſs you: trembling, fainting
" with anguiſh, I have a thouſand times
" thought I ſaw you, regarding me

" with a look of horror and indigna-
" tion; ſcorning, deteſting, ſpurning
" me from you, when kneeling at your
" feet I implored your pardon for hav-
" ing been the cauſe of miſery to you,
" and your pity for my unheard-of, my
" unknown ſufferings. Yet, Dormer,
" though ſuch ſhould be your ſenſations
" when you behold the character of
" Louiſa, ſhe is yet determined to break
" the dreadful ſilence which has reigned
" for the ſaid term of two long years,
" and to rend open the wound which
" time and reſentment have doubtleſs
" cloſed in your breaſt, by thus bring-
" ing herſelf to your view, the moſt
" undone and forlorn of the human
" race; and, while ſhe ſues, proſtrate
" on the ground, ſues for your com-
" paſſion, ſhe may, perhaps, provoke
" your nature to revenge, by aſking
" your protection for an object as help-
" leſs as infancy can make him, and as

" deſtitute

" deſtitute as poverty, and the calami-
" tous circumſtance of his birth, can
" render a human being. The moment
" of his exiſtence, involved mine in
" darkneſs and deſpair; yet heaven and
" nature, ordaining me to be a ſorrow-
" ful mother, have thought fit to im-
" plant in my boſom thoſe maternal
" feelings which call loudly on me to
" cheriſh and preſerve him: but na-
" ture and maternal feeling command
" in vain, unleſs you will ſtretch forth
" an arm to ſave him;—yes, Dormer,
" you, of all the human race, on whom
" he has the leaſt claim; for, had he
" not been, I had been your innocent
" and happy wife. Reflect then ere
" you determine; think, on one hand,
" that this guiltleſs, but unfortunate
" offspring of your once-beloved Lou-
" iſa, is the fatal cauſe of her ruin,
" and your ſorrow; for, too well I
" know, you could not caſt me from
" your heart for ever without a pang.

" Then let the ſofter dictates of huma-
" nity prevail. Conſider whether you
" will doom a creature, unoffending in
" himſelf, and reproachable only for the
" crimes of his parents, whether you
" can bring yourſelf to pronounce him
" a friendleſs unprotected orphan; which
" he muſt be, if you refuſe to receive
" him; for I can no longer live in the
" world; the few weary days I muſt
" drag on in unabating miſery, I wiſh
" to ſpend in the boſom of religious
" ſolitude. My faith opens to me an
" aſylum, which I am preparing to fly
" to, where the pity of the holy Saints
" and the prayers of the pious Siſter-
" hood, may perchance, if any thing
" may, ſoothe the anguiſh of a breaking
" heart: but, ere I go, I muſt perform
" my duty to ~~my~~ poor child; I muſt
" leave him with ſome kind compaſ-
" ſionate friend, if ſuch a one there is,
" who commiſerates my deſtiny, and
" will reſcue my infant Charles. Do not

" ſtart

" ſtart, Dormer, at my temerity in giv-
" ing him a name, fondly even in all
" the bitterneſs of affliction loved and
" remembered, pronounced in anguiſh,
" called, vainly called upon, to ſnatch
" me from guilt, miſery, and ſhame.
" This little wretch, this Charles, then
" cries out to you; and Oh! let that be-
" nevolent ſenſibility, that generous
" pity for the unhappy which uſed to
" animate your ſoul, let it revive again
" in behalf of your helpleſs petitioner.
" Come not near me, I charge you; for
" inſtant death would follow the firſt
" glance my eye ſhould take of you;
" neither write to me, for either kind
" forgiveneſs, or cruel reproach, would
" equally diſorder my ſenſes: but, if
" my prayers and intreaties prevail,
" ſend to ——————, where I will
" have my poor boy conveyed, after I
" have preſſed him for the laſt time to
" my throbbing boſom, and imprinted
" a ſad and parting kiſs upon his lips;

" he ſhall be conveyed to meet your
" your meſſenger at the hour of ſix in
" the morning. Call him only Charles,
" if you will, indeed, become the guar-
" dian of his infancy; ſpeak not to him
" of his parents; and never let the
" hated name of ——— ſound in his
" ear as belonging to him. Mr. ——
" and his family leave England in
" the courſe of a fortnight; perhaps
" ſooner. I ſhall accompany them to
" the place I have fixed on for my fu-
" ture abode, ſo long as the earth is to
" be burdened with one ſo loſt, ſo
" clothed in calamity as I am. Now,
" Dormer, I cloſe the ſcene betwixt us
" for ever: when I am dead, all myſtery
" ſhall be explained: then, and not till
" then, I aſk you to acquit me of in-
" tentional guilt. — May our bleſſed
" Mother watch over your life, and re-
" ſtore you to happineſs, obtaining the
" protection of her perfect Son for you
" here, and a glorious ſeat in his pre-

" ſence

" ſence hereafter. Adieu, moſt ho-
" noured, moſt eſteemed and beloved
" of men, adieu for ever. Such is the
" ſentence of condemnation to the hap-
" leſs Louiſa."

CHAPTER XXXII.

OVER this letter Edelfrida ſhed a torrent of tears, and returned it to Mrs. Conway, unable to give utterance to the ſenſations it had cauſed in her mind: that lady then continued the calamitous ſtory:—" Dormer," reſumed ſhe, " obſerving how much I " was agitated by Louiſa's letter, drew " near the table, and, fixing his eyes on " me, he exclaimed in a ſoftened tone, " You weep, Fanny, you weep over, " perhaps, the artful production of a " brain which conceived my ruin; in " your compaſſion for my deſtroyer, " you forget your brother's injuries." " —Never, my dear Charles," I re- " plied, " never can I forget them, or " the ſufferings they have inflicted; " but read this letter, and confeſs it

" was

" was impoſſible not to feel pity for
" the unhappy writer, not to ſhed tears
" over her misfortunes as well as my
" brother's, well as I love you, and
" much as I lament your ruined hap-
" pineſs." I held the letter towards
" him, he looked irreſolute whether to
" take it or not: " It contains a requeſt,"
" ſaid I, " relative to, and in behalf of an
" innocent perſon."—" Then, cried he,
" I muſt read it; to heſitate, were un-
" juſt." But to tell you, my dear Edel-
" frida, what various emotions ſhook his
" frame, as he fixed his eyes in eager gaze
" on the paper, is impoſſible. " Oh!
" Louiſa," at length burſt from him,
" if thou art indeed innocent, how ſhall
" I ever make thee amends for all the
" wrong I have done thee." He then
" preſſed the paper to his lips and his
" boſom, alternately, and wept like an
" infant over it. " I will, I will," he
" cried, " protect thy child; he ſhall be
" mine, and, for thy ſake, I will cheriſh

" him:—Yes, Fanny," continued he, " taking my hand, " you ſhall aſſiſt me " to preſerve this unfortunate boy, this " little Charles; we will fetch him, and " he ſhall be the adopted ſon of your " brother." After this exertion, he " threw himſelf on a ſofa, and ſunk " into the moſt profound thoughtful- " neſs, in which he continued many " hours ruminating, no doubt on Louiſa " and her miſerable fate. Happily, it " never occurred to him that the au- " thor of it could be living, or was " ſtill within the reach of his ven- " geance; and Louiſa had carefully " guarded againſt any diſcovery of " that kind. At the appointed time, " my mother's maid ſet off in a poſt- " chaiſe, attended by Dormer on horſe- " back, to the place Louiſa had named, " and there they were met by a woman, " who came to deliver the child. On " ſeeing my brother, ſhe ſaid, " To " you, Sir, I am to give up my charge." " She then reſigned him, and departed.

" Dormer

" Dormer received him in ſilence, and,
" putting him into the ſervant's arms,
" returned home with his little ward.

" The little innocent fellow, uncon-
" ſcious of the grief his birth had oc-
" caſioned, was ſoon reconciled to us;
" and the ſhort time my brother had
" to remain at home, he chiefly ſpent
" in retracing the features of Louiſa
" in her ſon's face. At his departure
" he committed him to our care; and,
" a ſervant having been procured to
" attend upon him, he lived conſtantly
" in the houſe with us, and we became
" exceedingly attached to him. My
" marriage took place ere my brother
" returned from this voyage, in which
" he was abſent three years; my
" mother was too anxious to ſubmit
" to ſo long a delay, expreſſing the
" greateſt ſolicitude to ſee one of her
" children happy ere ſhe died. When I
" removed to Mr. Conway's houſe, I
" left little Charles; he was from this
" period the conſtant companion and

" amuſement of my mother, who was
" become too old and infirm to change
" her reſidence. Dormer came back to
" England in the ſtate of health and ſpi-
" rits in which you now ſee him; little
" alteration has ſince been made in him,
" nor do I think he will ever more
" change. Whilſt he continued with
" us, we had the affliction of burying
" our only and tenderly beloved parent:
" he then brought his ward with him
" to our houſe, where he lived till a
" ſhip, to the command of which he
" was appointed, was ready for the
" expedition on which it was deſtined
" to ſail. By this time Charles had
" entered his ſixth year, and he was
" placed with a clergyman in our neigh-
" bourhood, as a ſort of nurſery-
" ſchool, my brother intending, when
" he was old enough, to take him on
" board his own ſhip, his diſpoſition
" and his genius fitting him for the
" profeſſion of a ſailor."

Here

Here Edelfrida recollected Lady Wilford's malicious inſinuation about Dormer's *protégé*, and felt the warmeſt indignation, to find that actions ſo nobly diſintereſted ſhould be conſtrued into a cauſe for cenſure and reproach; and that the baſe and unworthy ſhould dare to utter the vileſt falſehoods, at the expence of characters too excellent for the generality of mankind to copy, and as much above praiſe, as they ought to be out of the reach of ſlander.

"In the end, then," continued Mrs. Conway, "Charles became a ſailor, "under my brother's eye, where he "would probably have grown up to "manhood, had not my misfortunes "recalled his father and friend from "the active ſcene of life in which, as "a profeſſional man, he was engaged. "Mr. Conway's death left me expoſed "to many evils, with two boys to "guard and educate. At the cloſe of "the

" the war, then, my brother relinquiſhed
" his command, and came to reſide
" conſtantly with me. Fearful of giving
" him pain, I exerted myſelf, by which
" means I conquered the ſadneſs which
" would otherwiſe have gained upon
" me. We were now partners in af-
" fiction, and each made it their ſtudy
" to ſoothe and amuſe the other. When
" my boys were old enough to go to
" ſchool, they were placed in the neigh-
" bourhood of London, where they
" ſtill are, and from whence they will be
" removed to Eaton, which induced
" us to purchaſe this villa. Charles,
" our other ſon, is now in his twelfth
" year, and a moſt charming boy he is,
" full of animation, ſpirit, and gene-
" roſity, and will, I have no doubt,
" make his way in the world exceed-
" ingly well, with my brother's aſſiſt-
" ance, who has ſettled three thouſand
" pounds upon him, to which he will

be

" be entitled whenever it ſhall pleaſe
" heaven to rob him of his guardian;
" but that event, I fervently hope, is
" very diſtant, or all that I have hi-
" therto ſuffered would appear trifling;
" for, after having buried a beloved
" mother, a huſband to whom I was
" tenderly attached, and received an
" early ſhock in Dormer's diſappoint-
" ments,—at length to loſe him, my
" laſt, my only ſurviving friend, would,
" I think, ſoon make an end of me.
" I thank heaven, however, that at
" preſent I have nothing of that nature
" to apprehend: Dormer enjoys tole-
" rable health, and ſometimes I flatter
" myſelf his ſpirits improve; the inte-
" reſt he takes in the welfare of his
" friends, preſerves him from melan-
" choly; and you, my dear Edelſrida,
" have contributed. He feels an affec-
" tion for you truly internal: I wiſh
" very ſincerely you could both forget
" paſt events, and augment this re-

" gard

" gard into love; how joyfully ſhould
" I embrace my ſiſter, already my
" fire'd!"

" Thank you, my dear Madam," replied Edelfrida, " both for your " recital and your kind and generous " wiſhes; but I fear Mr. Dormer and " I ſhall find it equally difficult to paſs " an act of oblivion over our memo- " ries; and, till that can be done, we " can neither be happy together nor " ſeparate. But, pardon me, you pro- " miſed to inform me how you became " acquainted with thoſe particulars of " poor Louiſa's ſad hiſtory, which prove " her innocent."—" I had forgotten," ſaid Mrs. Conway, " that that part was " omitted. Why, about two years ago, " a gentlemann called upon me in " town, who was juſt arrived from " France; he brought the intelligence " of Mr. ———'s death, and intro- " duced himſelf to me as the brother " of Louiſa, the one I ſpoke of before,

" who

" who was intended for orders in the
" Catholic church: his office, he told
" me, together with the connexion
" between his family and Mr. ———,
" had given him an opportunity of
" being preſent when that wretched
" man expired; indeed, he had been
" ſent for, for the purpoſe of receiving
" his confeſſion."—" Think, Ma'am,"
" added he, " what I ſuffered through
" the whole of this deadly diſcloſure!
" The ſiſter whom I had reprobated as
" a guilty creature, I now diſcovered
" had been the victim of a villain's
" paſſion. I was petrified; I gazed in
" ſilent horror on the wretch as he
" lay agonized with pain, and the
" terrors of his approaching diſſolu-
" tion; and nothing, I believe, but his
" piercing groans, and his convulſed
" frame, could have awakened me from
" the ſtupor. At length, however, I
" conſtrained myſelf to perform the
" duties of my ſacred function; I en-

" deavoured

" deavoured to calm the anguiſh of
" his mind; I prayed for, and forgave
" him, as far as I could forgive; I
" recommended him to mercy from the
" bottom of my ſoul; and left him not,
" till the ſhades of death had cloſed
" around him. I then haſtened to
" pour ſome comfort into my poor
" undone Louiſa's mind, to tell her
" that Mr. ———, now no more, had
" bequeathed her ſon to my care, ſup-
" poſing him ſtill with the woman who
" had charge of him when his mo-
" ther bade adieu to her native coun-
" try for ever, and a thouſand pounds
" was named in his will as a proviſion
" for him. Louiſa received my intel-
" ligence with little emotion: her grief
" appears to have exhauſted all thoſe
" lively feelings for which ſhe was once
" remarkable."—" God forgive him!"
" ſhe exclaimed, raiſing her eyes to hea-
" ven. She then told me in what manner
" ſhe had diſpoſed of her ſon, and con-

" jured

" jured me to leave him ſtill under Mr.
" Dormer's protection; ſhe alſo exacted
" a promiſe from me, that what remained
" of her misfortunes, unknown to him,
" ſhould be ſtill kept ſecret. " From
" me," ſaid ſhe, " he ſhall receive
" a faithful account of every action of
" my life ſince we parted. I ſhall
" leave it, written in my own hand, to
" bed elivered to him when I am dead;
" and, if I do not deceive myſelf, it will
" not be many years ere the peaceful
" tomb ſhall guard my poor remains
" from further outrage." I did not
" wiſh to diſtreſs her by a minute in-
" quiry into her reaſons for this requeſt;
" but promiſed to grant it, not doubt-
" ing but you will alſo indulge her;
" for I mentioned my deſign to her of
" relating every circumſtance to you,
" as an act of juſtice to her innocence.
" I found that Mr. Dormer was out of
" town, and therefore choſe this time
" to wait upon you. I promiſed

" to

" to preſerve the ſecret carefully; and " he then took his leave, declining my " invitation to prolong his viſit."

The entrance of Dormer now put a ſtop to all further converſation on this ſubject, and the two ladies attempted to appear tolerably cheerful: but Dormer, having dined out with a neighbouring gentleman, was himſelf exhauſted and low; ſo that the reſt of the evening was ſpent very much in ſilence by all parties; for Mrs. Conway and Edelfrida could neither of them entirely overcome thoſe ſenſations which poor Louiſa's ſtory had excited. The next morning, while they were at breakfaſt, a ſervant brought in a letter which he ſaid Captain Mandeville's groom was juſt arrived with. Dormer broke the ſeal, and read; having finiſhed, he gave it to Mrs. Conway, and bid her read it up. " The danger being over," ſaid he, " we may venture to truſt you with the " contents." Mrs. Conway then began.

'Fearing

'Fearing that common fame, who is
'ſaid, you know, to be a common liar,
'ſhould fly to Beech-grove with a report
'of my death, while I am in perfect
health and ſafety, I diſpatch George, on
'the wings of expedition, to give you the
'particulars of a trifling affair which I
'was engaged in yeſterday. You know
'me well enough, Dorner, to be certain
'that there are ſome things, which I will
'defend at the hazard of my life, any
'hour of it, my pretenſions to the honour
'of Miſs Dudley's affections, not the leaſt
'amongſt them. Chance threw me, the
'night before, into the company of a man,
'who thought proper to call me to an ac-
'count for my preſumption, and de-
'manded my title to addreſs that lady.
'I took fire, you may be ſure, at this un-
'expected attack, and told him I would
'reply to his demand with a piſtol, when-
'ever he thought fit; but in no other
'way. "In the morning then, Sir,"
'ſaid he, "I ſhall expect to meet you

"in

" in the Park; I ſhall bring a friend
" with me; and, if you continue in the
" ſame mind, not to anſwer my enquiry
" by a clear and circumſtantial account
" of your intimacy, and the terms you
" are upon with her, we muſt proceed
" to ſettle the matter as you propoſe;
" I ſhall be prepared for it." Then,
' not to interrupt the harmony of the
' company, we let the ſubject drop, and
' in the morning met, according to agree-
' ment. Had there been time, I ſhould
' have ſent to beg your preſence at the
' place of rendezvous; but, that being
' impoſſible, I communicated the affair
' to Ruſſel, of our corps, and he accom-
' panied me. My antagoniſt that was to
' be, arrived there at the ſame moment,
' attended by his friend Mr. Evelyne.
' We walked up to each other, bowed,
' and went through thoſe ceremonies with
' admirable coolneſs, then proceeded to
' buſineſs. " It occurs to me, gentlemen,"
' ſaid Mr. Evelyne, " that this affair

" may

" may be honourably ſettled on both
" ſides, without having recourſe to
" thoſe extremities, which I dare be-
" lieve you are men of too much feel-
" ing and reflexion to inſiſt upon as ne-
" ceſſary, provided it appears that you
" are equally in an error." We both ex-
" claimed—" Impoſſible! The one calls
" in queſtion the other's pretenſions to
" Miſs Dudley, which that other is re-
" ſolute in defending without explana-
" tion." " May I aſk," ſaid Mr. Eve-
" lyne, " whether Miſs Dudley is
" daughter or niece to the baronet of
" that name, to whom you, Captain
" Mandeville, are attached? you will
" not, I hope, think the inquiry im-
" pertinent or officious." " Not in the
" leaſt, Sir," returned I, " I have no
" reaſon to conceal my attachment to
" Sir Edward Dudley's daughter: I
" glory in it, though on ſuch an oc-
" caſion her name ought not to have
" been ſported with." " Now, Of-

" mond,"

" mond," ſaid Mr. Evelyne, " confeſs " that you have no right to demand " from this gentleman any explanation " of his conduct." Lord Oſmond ' then in the handſomeſt manner begged ' my pardon for the liberty he had ' taken with me; and in confidence ' acquainted us with the cauſe of a ' miſtake he had fallen into. He offered ' me any ſatisfaction I required, as an ' apology for his inconſiderate and im- ' petuous conduct: but I muſt have ' been a moſt blood-thirſty ſcoundrel, ' not to have been ſatisfied with this ' manly and ingenuous confeſſion of ' the regret he felt for having given me ' ſo much unneceſſary trouble; and, in ' my turn, I very willingly acknowledged ' that, had I ſooner recollected a cir- ' cumſtance which I am now not at ' liberty to name even to you, I ſhould ' have gueſſed at leaſt to whom he allu- ' ded, when he firſt made his demand ' upon me. Every thing being thus

' ami-

'ing thus amicably ſettled, we agreed to
'dine together, and I never ſpent a
'more agreeable day. My new friends
'are two as pleaſant men as ever I met
'with; I don't know to which I ſhould
'give the preference. Lord Oſmond is
'a fine ſpirited young fellow, a little
'raſh, but ſenſible, candid, and open-
'hearted; Mr. Evelyne, particularly
'mild, and like a gentleman in manners;
'and his behaviour as the friend of Lord
'Oſmond, proves him to be a man of
'ſenſe and principle. So that you find
'what in the beginning wore a threaten-
'ing aſpect, turns out to my advantage,
'by the acquiſition to my acquaintance
'of two ſuch eſtimable men. I find that
'we have not eſcaped the report of the
'day; but we have eſcaped what is of
'much more conſequence, blowing one
'another's brains out. 'Tis high time for
'me to conclude. Give my love to the
'ladies, and tell Edelfrida that I have only
'caught one paſſing glance from the

'coach-window of my Maria; ſo what is 'going forward in St. James's Square 'I cannot inform her: aſſure her how-'ever, as well as yourſelf and my amiable 'Mrs. Conway, that my beſt wiſhes at-'tend you all, and that I remain

'Your faithful friend,

'W. MANDEVILLE.'

While this letter was reading, Edelfrida underwent a variety of emotions. Who Lord Oſmond could be, ſhe was totally at a loſs to conjecture; yet, had ſhe not heard his name, ſhe ſhould have concluded, by the deſcription, that Henry Evelyne was the man, and ſhe herſelf the Miſs Dudley in queſtion: of Lord Oſmond ſhe had not even a perſonal knowledge; ſhe could not therefore be at all concerned. Mr. Evelyne being a party, puzzled her ſtill more; and the circumſtance to which Mandeville alluded, but was not at liberty to name, ſhe ſhould have thought was the adventure

venture in Kenſington Gardens. Thus perplexed, ſhe ſat ſilent and buried in reflection, till Mrs. Conway, ſmiling, aſked, "Do you know Lord Oſmond, "my dear?" "Not in the leaſt, Ma'am," replied Edelfrida, colouring: and obſerving that her friend looked incredulous, ſhe added, "I never heard his name "mentioned in my life before." "I "ſhould have thought otherwiſe from "Mandeville's letter," ſaid Dormer, without knowing a word of what had paſſed between his ſiſter and her—"I "ſhould have imagined, Edelfrida, that "you were the lady about whom our "friend had nearly been obliged to "riſk his life, if a judicious friend had "not interpoſed?" "That's impoſſible," replied ſhe, "for Lord Oſmond cannot "know that I am in exiſtence." The horſes then being ready for them to ride out, no more was ſaid; and Edelfrida was happy to be at leiſure to enjoy her own thoughts a little on the

myſterious ſubject. In a few days they were under the neceſſity of returning to town; and in the mean time Mrs. Conway and Edelfrida had no opportunity of converſing alone, or communicating to each other their ideas on the late affair; indeed, the latter did not ſeek it: her ride back to London was a very melancholy one; and with no pleaſant feelings ſhe found herſelf at Sir Edward's door once again.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EDELFRIDA and Mrs. Conway took leave of each other with great regret, and a promiſe on the part of the former ſoon to ſee her friends again. When ſhe entered the houſe, her firſt enquiry was for Maria; and not a little diſappointed and vexed was ſhe to receive intelligence that Miſs Dudley was gone out of town with Lady Wilford the day before; but where, they did not know. She then aſked who was at home. "Sir Edward and my Lady, Ma'am," replied the ſervant. She walked up ſtairs into the drawing-room, where ſhe found Lady Dudley alone. "So "Ma'am," ſaid her Ladyſhip, "you "do condeſcend to return back to us." "I never had any other intention,

" Ma'am," replied Edelfrida. It was " vaſtly kind in you," returned Lady Dudley with a ſneer. " And I ſuppoſe you " are come with a budget of news for " your friend Maria, who unfortunately " is not here to receive it.—No, Ma- " dam," continued ſhe, raiſing her voice, and looking furiouſly on the terrified Edelfrida, " I have taken care to " put a ſtop to your cabals: no more " intelligence ſhall paſs ſo conveniently " about Captain Mandeville. Miſs " Dudley has made herſelf ſufficiently " ridiculous already: the town rings " with her abſurdities. Truly ſhe muſt " have a duel fought for her, to cele- " brate her fame; and you, you miſ- " chievous meddling go-between, have " been at the bottom of all. I wonder " you are not aſhamed to appear before " me, after having deſtroyed the peace " of my family, and acted ſuch an un- " derhand part. Who could tell that " fellow, but you, that Lady Wilford

" had

" had informed us what was going for-
" ward, to draw upon her his inſolent
" revenge? And nothing could be bet-
" ter contrived than your meeting at
" your amiable friend Mrs. Conway's
" houſe, there to lay your heads toge-
" ther, how to circumvent our proceed-
" ings, and undermine our authority.
" But let me tell you that you have
" played your laſt game—you ſhall ei-
" ther marry Mr. Martin in the courſe
" of a week, for he is ſtill fool enough
" to love you, or you will be diſpoſed
" of in a way you will not very much
" like, I fancy; for that independence
" which made you ſo confident, is
" no more." Here Edelfrida raiſed her head, and with a look of ſurpriſe fixed her eyes on Lady Dudley, whoſe face was enflamed with rage. " Your
" independence," cried ſhe, " I repeat
" it, is no more: if you don't under-
" ſtand that, your fortune is loſt. The
" perſon with whom it was placed is

" ruined, a bankrupt, not able to pay
" a ſhilling. What do you think of
" your independence now, Ma'am?"
Edelfrida with difficulty ſupported her-
ſelf on her chair; ſhe fixed her eyes in
dumb deſpair on the floor; ſhe gaſped
for breath. " Why don't you tear your
" beautiful hair?" exclaimed the un-
feeling Lady Dudley:—" why not utter
" a frantic cry to move our pity for
" your ſufferings? You look as if you
" did not hear, child—will you go on
" the ſtage? That elegant figure and
" fine voice of yours, may be ſeen and
" heard to advantage there. Or will you
" paint ſcreens and fan-mounts in a
" lodging up three pair of ſtairs? There
" will be ſomething very romantic in
" that; and then you may write your
" own hiſtory, you know, and all the
" apprentices in town will weep over
" it; for they are great judges of the
" pathetic, and dote on a ſtory from real
" life, replete with wonderful adven-
" tures

" tures and ſtrange viciſſitudes." This refinement on malice was, however, loſt on Edelfrida; the unexpected blow ſo abruptly ſtruck on her ſenſes, that ſhe was deaf to all that followed it. Lady Dudley might therefore have ſpared her wit, for her unfortunate victim heard it not; but, while ſhe was yet uttering the laſt words, fell motionleſs on the floor. Her Ladyſhip rang the bell; and on the footman's appearing, ſhe coolly bid him " ſend up two of the women " to convey Miſs Edelfrida to her own " room." The man looked ſhocked at the manner in which the order was delivered; but, not daring to reply, he haſtened down ſtairs, that no time might be loſt in affording the wretched Edelfrida relief and aſſiſtance. Lady Dudley never moved to help her: but when Miſs Dudley's maid, who was left at home, and one of the houſe-maids, came, ſhe ordered them to carry her up to her own apartment, without even

recommending it to them to give her any thing to aid her recovery. The women attempted to raiſe her; but, dead to all ſenſe or feeling, ſhe lay totally unconſcious of their efforts, which were in vain: they found they could not carry her up ſtairs. "Then call ſome of the "men," ſaid her Ladyſhip angrily. The men were called, and Edelfrida, at length, laid on her own bed. The women ſervants rubbed her hands and temples, and poured hartſhorn and water into her mouth; in ſhort, they adminiſtered every thing they could think of to recall her to life, for a conſiderable time without effect: and when at laſt ſhe did open her eyes, the languor ſhe ſuffered was too great to allow her to ſpeak a ſyllable for above an hour. Nancy, Miſs Dudley's maid, watched by her with tender concern; but neither Sir Edward or Lady Dudley ever ſent to aſk how ſhe did. The ſervants, more humane, frequently enquired at her door; and

the

the houſekeeper came herſelf to know if there was any thing ſhe could procure her, for which ſhe had an inclination. Edelfrida ſhook her head, and ſighing replied, " Nothing, I thank you; I ſhall " never have any inclination to eat " again. I hope I ſhall not long ſtand " in need of any ſupport in this world." " Nay, my dear young lady," ſaid the houſekeeper, " do not talk ſo; I hope " you will live and be happy yet. My " Lady's violent temper is too much for " you; but don't let it make you ſo " very unhappy." " Ah! Mayſon," returned Edelfrida feebly, " you can't " gueſs what cauſe I have to be un- " happy; I am at this inſtant a beg- " gar." Here ſhe burſt into tears; and the two women who ſtood by the bed, wept to ſee her weep. She was however relieved by this means, and felt her heart lighter than it was before. Mrs. Mayſon, finding her grow more compoſed, and having in vain urged her to

take ſomething, now wiſhed her "good "night;" adding, "her hope that ſhe "would ſoon be better and happier; "and that, as to what ſhe ſaid of being "a beggar, my maſter, Sir Edward is "rich enough, Ma'am; and you are "his niece; he can never ſee you want "for any thing." Edelfrida ſhook her head, but thanked her for her good wiſhes. When ſhe was gone, Edelfrida ſaid, "Nancy, did your miſtreſs leave "no letter or meſſage for me, ere "ſhe left town, to return to it, perhaps, "no more whilſt I am here." "She "had not time to write, Ma'am," replied Nancy; "for her going was ſo "ſudden, that ſhe did not know of it "half an hour before ſhe went, and "during that ſhort time my Lady "took care to engage her; ſo that ſhe "had no opportunity of ſaying more "than, as ſhe pretended to give me "ſome orders about her cloaths, ſhe

"whiſpered

" whiſpered, " Tell my couſin, when " ſhe returns, that I am in deſpair to " be torn from her at this time; but " charge her not to let her reſolution for- " ſake her, as ſhe values my peace or her " own happineſs in future: give my " tendereſt love to her." This, Ma'am, " is, as near as I can remember, what " my miſtreſs bid me tell you; and I " ſhould have told you before, but I " thought you were too ill to attend to " me." " My ever kind Maria," exclaimed Edelfrida, " I will obey you; " my reſolution ſhall not again forſake " me." No—I call heaven to witneſs, " I will endeavour to bear my fate with " patience and fortitude." Then turning to Nancy, ſhe ſaid, " Go to bed, " my good girl; you need not fear leaving me: I am quite compoſed, and " I wiſh to dedicate this night to the " forming a plan neceſſary for my fu- " ture conduct." Nancy begged ſhe

would

would ſuffer her to ſtay; "I will not "interrupt you, Ma'am," ſaid ſhe, "but, indeed, I could not be eaſy to "leave you; and beſides, my miſtreſs "would be much diſpleaſed if I did, "I know." When Edelfrida found that ſhe would not go, ſhe made her lie on the other ſide the bed, expreſſing her reſolution not take off her clothes: "The exertion would juſt now be too "much for me," added ſhe. This point being ſettled, Edelfrida reſigned herſelf to meditation on what was beſt for her to do. Againſt marrying Mr. Martin ſhe was never more firmly reſolved; therefore, about him ſhe did not deliberate in the leaſt. "Shall I "ſtay then," ſaid ſhe to herſelf, "to "be the victim of Lady Dudley's "power? She hinted at a deſign of "diſpoſing of me: but I will, if poſ-"ſible, ſpare her the trouble; I will "diſpoſe of myſelf; but where or

"how,

" how, that is the queſtion." She reflected ſome minutes on it; and at length an idea came acroſs her mind that her old ſervant and friend, now Lord Walton's houſekeeper, might poſſibly aſſiſt her to find out ſome retreat for the preſent, till ſhe could determine on ſome mode of procuring for herſelf a proviſion in which her various accompliſhments might hereafter befriend her. This thought no ſooner preſented itſelf, than, rapid in her concluſions, ſhe adopted it, and waited impatiently for morning, that ſhe might execute part of her purpoſe by writing to Mrs. Williams. She next conſidered the probability there was of this ſcheme being oppoſed by her uncle and Lady Dudley, who from motives of pride, not of affection, might detain her in their power, which, till ſhe came of age, ſhe could not diſpute; and, not being yet eighteen, ſhe could by no means endure to

ſpend above three years longer, ſubject to their authority—no, not in the ſociety of her beloved Maria. To eſcape then, was her only alternative; for ſhe would not hazard the ſucceſs of her plan by mentioning it, except to Nancy, whom ſhe did not deſpair of making a friend of. The morning no ſooner dawned than ſhe roſe from her bed, ready dreſſed; and unlocking her writing box, ſhe preſently finiſhed a few lines to Mrs. Williams, deſiring her privately to provide her with ſome obſcure lodging in the country near Walton Park, and to let it paſs in the neighbourhood that ſhe was her niece. The reaſon for this requeſt ſhe promiſed to explain when they met: ſhe charged her to be ſpeedy, and direct her anſwer, under cover, to Mrs. Nancy Watſon. When Nancy, who had not the ſame cauſe to baniſh ſleep as Edelfrida, awoke, ſhe eaſily prevailed on her to ſend that to the Poſt-

office,

office, and to receive the anſwer, as already mentioned. When Edelfrida was left entirely to herſelf, ſhe ſummoned all the fortitude of her ſoul to her aid, and determined to ſtand unmoved amidſt the ruin which encompaſſed her: ſhe armed her mind with a ſtern kind of calmneſs, which enabled her to view herſelf deſtitute, and on the eve of becoming an outcaſt and a fugitive, without any of thoſe burſts of grief, or that ſoftneſs of ſorrow, which might have been expected from her ſex and age. "Happineſs," ſaid ſhe, "I had for ever "loſt ſight of before; what then have "I to regret? Induſtry is the beſt anti-"dote to deſpair; and a little will ſuf-"fice to ſupply my neceſſities. O "Evelyne! unkind, ungenerous Eve-"lyne! why did I ever behold you? "or why did you ever delude me into "a belief that I was dear to you? "Why did you teach me this leſſon of "miſery?

" miſery? How difficult it is to forget
" what we have dwelt on with delight,
" and indulged ourſelves in the plea-
" ſing expectation of poſſeſſing!"

While thus ſhe ſat feeding with reflection the malady which conſumed her peace, a meſſage from Lady Dudley was brought up to her, deſiring her to go down into her Ladyſhip's dreſſing-room.—" Does ſhe want to inſult me
" with my poverty?" cried ſhe, when the ſervant was gone—" but my pride ſhall
" ſupport me againſt her malice; it
" it ſhall teach me to ſmile at her
" threats." She then ſlowly deſcended, and once more entered the preſence of Lady Dudley, who held a letter open in her hand. " I ſent for you, Ma'am," ſaid her Ladyſhip, " to convey your
" uncle's commands to you; for, till he
" is aſſured of your compliance, he
" forbids you to appear before him." Edelfrida ſeated herſelf in ſilence. " In

" the

" the firſt place then," continued Lady Dudley, " here is the letter, which will " confirm what I yeſterday told you, " about the bankruptcy in which your " fortune is involved: I ſee they give " Sir Edward ſome hopes of receiving " part of it, when things are ſettled." Edelfrida took the letter, but ſpoke not; her Ladyſhip then reſumed:—" Mr. " Martin is ſtill willing to connect " himſelf with us, through your means; " and you cannot now be ſo blind to " your intereſt, and obſtinately fooliſh, " as to reject him. If you do, I am " commiſſioned to tell you, that you " are to be ſent to an eſtate Sir Edward " has in Wales, upon which there is " an old houſe, fit to indulge medita- " tion in; there you are to reſide, ſhut " up with an old woman, who is to be " anſwerable for your conduct: not a " living creature will you ſee there, " except this perſon, and a few igno- " rant domeſtics, who cannot ſpeak a

" word

" word of Engliſh. Chooſe then which " you pleaſe, for one or the other is to " be your fate." Edelfrida deteſted diſſimulation, and her reſolution was on her lips, when fear and prudence checked the utterance; and ſhe reſolved to diſſemble for a few days, till ſhe had ſecured her retreat. " Your Ladyſhip," replied ſhe, " already knows my repug- " nance to a marriage with Mr. Mar- " tin; and you cannot doubt but that I " feel a deſire to eſcape the alternative " alſo; but as a moment's deliberation " between two evils (which is the " greateſt, not being yet quite clear to " me) is very inſufficient, I hope you " will permit me to take two or " three days to determine in."—" Very " well, Ma'am," replied Lady Dudley, " ſince you now heſitate, we may hope " you will attend to reaſon in the end: " you ſhall be gratified as to the time " for conſideration; and, on condition " that you make the choice which you

" know

" know will be moſt agreeable to your
" uncle, he as well as myſelf promiſe
" to forget all cauſe of diſpleaſure, and
" convince you that you are regarded
" as a near relation: nothing ſhall be
" omitted on our parts to give you all
" all proper conſequence. Now you
" may again retire to your room; and,
" that no interruption may be given to
" your reflections, you ſhall have every
" thing ſent up to you: and till you
" determine, it is thought better that
" you neither pay nor receive any viſits
" whatever; all letters, notes, and meſ-
" ſages, are alſo prohibited for that time:
" afterwards, you will either be free as
" air, careſſed and indulged in every
" thing, or you will be immediately
" hurried into Wales, which depends
" on yourſelf." Edelfrida curtſied,
" and withdrew." " So," ſaid ſhe,
walking acroſs her room, " I am a
" priſoner then. Oh! my father, could
" you behold how I am treated, you
" would

"would repent that ever you commit-
"ted me to your brother's protection."
"—Protection!" ſhe exclaimed again, with energy, "Oh! heavens, what
"a term to give tyranny, injuſtice, and
"power ſtretched beyond its limits!
"But I will break the chain, and fly
"to ſome peaceful, though humble
"aſylum." When ſhe had calmed the perturbation Lady Dudley's intelligence had raiſed in her ſoul, ſhe reflected on the ingratitude ſhe ſhould appear to be guilty of to Mrs. Conway, in neither calling nor writing to her, ere ſhe bade a final adieu to London. The former was impoſſible; for ſhe meant not to loſe a moment after ſhe had received Mrs. Williams's reply, which ſhe doubted not would be a propitious one, but leave her preſent abode inſtantly, and ſet out in the ſtage-coach; having deſired inſtructions where it ſet off from in town, and at what hour, and where it would ſet her down, that ſhe might have no

difficulties

difficulties from her ignorance on that ſubject to encounter. In the mean time then ſhe ſat down to write to Mrs. Conway: ſhe gave her a clear and circumſtantial hiſtory of what had happened, explained the motives on which ſhe acted, and concluded with the moſt animated expreſſions of gratitude, and everlaſting eſteem. "If ever," added ſhe, "I am in happier circumſtances, "you ſhall hear of me; if not, adieu "for ever: for why ſhould I torment "you and Mr. Dormer with unavailing "complaints of evils, which your friend-"ſhip, valuable as it is, cannot cure? "At preſent I am wretched, not un-"juſtly or unreaſonably ſo, you will, "I am ſure, acknowledge: deeply my "heart is wounded; and withal, I am "poor and deſtitute, and ſhall quickly "be a wanderer and friendleſs. I would "not, if I could, indulge myſelf with "ſeeing you even for a moment; for, "beſide that an interview would make

"the

" the ſeparation ſtill more painful and
" ſevere, you would, I know, gene-
" rouſly try to perſuade me it was un-
" neceſſary; but that muſt not be: my
" pride commands me to ſeek the means
" of life through the path of induſtry
" and independence, not through the
" more flowery one of friendſhip. Fare-
" well, then, moſt amiable, moſt be-
" loved friends! let not a thought of me
" interrupt your repoſe. Heaven knows
" there is too much miſery in the world;
" and you have both had a double por-
" tion. May the remainder of life be
" marked only by tranquillity! Give
" to Mandeville my beſt wiſhes for his
" happineſs; tell him, in endeavouring
" to ſerve him, I fear I have injured
" him; but he is too juſt to attribute
" the failure to me as a fault. His union
" with Maria is the only diſtant view I
" have of being reſtored to that dear
" and tenderly lamented friend; from
" her I have promiſed to receive the

" protection

" protection I can from no other perſon
" accept. Still I linger on this un-
" happy theme: forgive me, my dear
" Mrs. Conway, and you, Mr. Dormer,
" forgive me, if I have drawn from your
" eyes the tear of ſympathy; you have
" wept too much already. Here, then,
" I end, perhaps for ever; but where-
" ever my fate ſhall conduct me, I
" carry in my heart indelible impreſ-
" ſions of your goodneſs, and never-
" ceaſing gratitude. Be bleſſed, as your
" virtues, and your benevolence merit;
" and the prayers will for once be
" heard, of your affectionate

" EDELFRIDA DUDLEY."

This letter ſhe deſigned to leave with Nancy, as well as one for Maria, which was to the ſame purport, but in a more melancholy ſtrain, if poſſible: ſhe alſo wrote one, which ſhe determined to leave on her table, for Sir Edward and Lady Dudley, as a reaſon for quitting their

houſe in ſecret: and thus ſhe employed the two days which ſhe was to wait for Mrs. Williams's letter. Her clothes too ſhe packed up, and made herſelf ready for a ſpeedy departure. At length Nancy brought the anxiouſly-expected letter, which contained many ſorrowful expreſſions on Edelfrida's account, and promiſed implicit obedience to her directions. "I have, my dear young "lady," continued the good woman, "begged my Lady's leave to have a "niece with me for a ſhort time; ſo that "you may come here without any ſcru-"ple, in that character which you order "me to conſider you in. The coach "goes from ——: it ſets out of London "by ſeven o'clock in the morning, and "reaches ——, a village, (through "which it paſſes,) about eight in the "morning, only a quarter of a mile "from this place. I will take care to "be there to give you the meeting "every evening till you arrive. I am

"ſatisfied

" ſatisfied that you have good reaſons
" for the ſtep you are taking, though
" I am grieved to think that you are
" obliged to be for an hour in the hum-
" ble condition of a relation of mine.
" Never did I think I ſhould ſee the day
" when you would be ſo reduced, my
" ever-beloved miſtreſs. In all things
" however, you ſhall always command

" Your faithful and obliged,

" E. WILLIAMS.'

" Now, my good Nancy," ſaid Edelfrida, " I depend on your aſſiſtance to
" reſcue me from a fate to which I
" ſhould prefer death. I ſhall be for
" ever obliged to you, and Maria will
" thank you, if you will aid me to
" leave this houſe to-morrow evening,
" and find me out a place where I may
" ſleep in ſafety for one night, and be
" ready to leave London by ſeven
" o'clock the following morning."
" Dear! Ma'am," replied Nancy, " how

" will you get out unobſerved though,
" even if I could comply with your de-
" ſire?" " You muſt watch an oppor-
" tunity for me to ſlip out when there
" is nobody near," ſaid Edelfrida,
" through the lower door, up into the
" Square; and you muſt go with me
" till I can get into an hackney-coach.
" Have you no friend, no relation in
" town, at whoſe houſe I could re-
" main all night, and from whence
" I could ſet out?" " Yes, Ma'am,"
returned Nancy, " I have a ſiſter whoſe
" huſband is a ſailor, and now out at
" ſea: ſhe lodges in ——— Lane; and,
" if you could condeſcend to lie down
" on her bed, I am ſure ſhe will go
" with you to the coach, and get the
" man in whoſe houſe ſhe lives, and
" who is a very well-behaved perſon,
" to attend you alſo. I'll go in the
" morning and ſettle it with her, if you
" pleaſe; and, as I ſuppoſe you will
" chooſe to take your clothes with you,

" won't

" won't it be better for me to bid my
" ſiſter ſend her landlord for a bundle,
" which we will pretend is filled with
" ſome of my things for her to ſell?"
" Admirably contrived!" exclaimed Edelfrida, overjoyed to have ſo eaſily overcome all difficulties: her thoughts were too intently fixed on her eſcape, to admit of any other reflections at preſent. She went to bed; but her anxiety would not let her ſleep much. The next day, while her friendly meſſenger was out, ſettling the plan finally, ſhe buſied herſelf in putting up the things ſhe ſhould moſt want to be ſent in the evening, laying out others to preſent to Nancy, and locking up the reſt in a trunk, which ſhe meant to leave in Maria's care, till ſhe ſhould have occaſion to claim it.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AT length Nancy returned. "Well," cried Edelfrida, "my dear Nancy, "how have you ſucceeded?" "Oh, very "well, indeed, Ma'am," replied Nancy; "my ſiſter makes no kind of objection. "Now, if we can but get out unſeen, "every thing elſe will do. Moulſon, "the man I mentioned, will be here, "about ſix o'clock, or a little after; the "men-ſervants will then be in the di- "ning parlour. Have you any objection "to his beſpeaking a coach to ſtand on "the other ſide the Square, and waiting "near, to ſee you ſafe to it: for, if I "ſhould be miſſed, I do'nt know what "I can ſay for myſelf." "So far from "having any objection," replied Edel- frida, "I ſhall be impatient till the

"hour

" hour arrives, and will ſet about
" making myſelf ready for it, by tranſ-
" forming my appearance a little; but
" before we proceed any further, Nancy,"
continued ſhe, " let me thank you for
" your kind aſſiſtance: theſe things I
" ſhall never want; they may be uſe-
" ful to you; and this trifle (putting a
" guinea into her hand), though inade-
" quate to your ſervices or my wiſhes,
" is yet a token of my gratitude."
Nancy would generouſly have declined both the clothes and money, but Edelfrida inſiſted upon her taking them. She then bid her place the trunk in Maria's cloſet, where it was to remain till ſhe ſent for it: the other things contained in the bundle were put ready for going away. With a beating heart Edelfrida counted the hours: at length it ſtruck five. " One only intervenes then,"
ſhe cried, " between me and liberty: the
" future--but ah! let me not think of that;
" it ſhall ſuffice for the preſent, that I

" languiſh to be gone." She walked up and down her room, too reſtleſs to remain an inſtant in one place. The clock ſtruck ſix; her heart beat ſtill quicker; and ſhe wiſhed for Nancy to come up with an aching impatience: ſhe came. " I think you may venture, " Ma'am," whiſpered ſhe, though no perſon was near; but conſcience makes cowards of us all. " I have given " Moulſon the bundle," added ſhe, " and " he is hovering about till you are rea- " dy." " I am ready now," ſaid Edelfrida, trembling from head to foot. " Take theſe letters, dear Nancy; give " that to your miſtreſs, and get that con- " veyed to Mrs. Conway; let the other " lie on the table, to be delivered as di- " rected by the firſt perſon that finds " it. Now God bleſs you! farewell!" " God bleſs you, Ma'am!" replied Nancy inarticulately—" I wiſh you ſafe " and well to the end of your journey." Edelfrida preſſed her hand in ſilence, for

for her own emotions were growing painfully great: then wrapping herſelf in her cloak, and drawing her hat over her face, they ſtole gently down ſtairs, and reached the bottom of the flight into the offices, unobſerved; there they were met by one of the other maids. Edelfrida could ſcarcely ſtand; but Nancy's preſence of mind did not forſake her; "Come "this way, Mrs. Betty," ſaid ſhe. The other ſervant, thinking ſhe was ſpeaking to ſome friend, paſſed on, not to interrupt them; and Edelfrida the next minute found herſelf in the Square, ready to ſink with terror. Moulſon however, faithful to his appointment, watched her coming out, and then approaching. Nancy haſtily returned; and they went forward to the coach, into which he put Edelfrida and her clothes, then got up behind, and ordered the coachman to drive to ——— Lane. During this ride Edelfrida's ſpirits were in ſuch a ſtate of agitation, that ſhe had not a clear idea of any thing:

her mind was a perfect chaos, when the paſt and the preſent were blended in one diſtreſſing confuſion; and ſhe reached her deſtined habitation for that night, without having been able to recollect herſelf, or clearly judge of her ſituation. At the door of a very ſhabby-looking dwelling the coach ſtopped; and the door being opened by the perſon who attended her, ſhe alighted with trembling ſteps and a heavy heart. Having paid the coachman's demand, her guide carried her bundle; and ſhe followed him up a narrow pair of ſtairs, at the top of which Nancy's ſiſter ſtood ready to receive her. But when ſhe caſt her eyes round the room as ſhe entered it, the diſgraceful condition to which ſhe was reduced, ſtruck her with full force, and ſinking down upon a chair, ſhe burſt into tears. The young woman ſtood by, ſhocked to ſee her thus affected, yet feeling too much reſpect for her to break ſilence. Edelfrida at length recovered herſelf, and civilly

civilly expreſſed herſelf obliged by the readineſs with which ſhe had been aſſiſted: ſhe then requeſted that Mrs. Bates, the perſon in whoſe room ſhe was, would ſend and ſecure a place in the ſtage-coach, and alſo beſpeak a hackney-coach to convey her to it; giving her money for theſe purpoſes, and handſomely rewarding the man to whom ſhe was indebted for her ſafety from St. James's Square to —— Lane. Mrs. Bates then made tea, and intreated Edelfrida to take ſome; who complying, merely to ſatisfy her obliging hoſteſs, with difficulty ſwallowed one cup; then endeavoured to talk, in order to baniſh reflection; but that was no eaſy matter to accompliſh. Her forlorn and fugitive ſtate would obtrude itſelf; and an unconquerable ſadneſs every moment gained upon her mind. When her meſſenger returned from the coach-office, ſhe found her place was ſecured, and the neceſſary methods taken to render her leaving

London in the morning as commodious as the cauſe and nature of her journey would admit: all further thought therefore on that ſubject was needleſs. About ten o'clock ſhe was prevailed upon to drink a little wine and water, which had been purpoſely procured for her: ſhe then threw herſelf on the bed in her clothes, that, if haply the uneaſineſs of her mind and body ſhould ſeek relief from ſleep, ſhe might be ready at a moment's warning. By ſeven the next day, fatigue had its deſired effect, in ſpite of all the painful ideas which would have oppoſed its influence, and Edelfrida inſenſibly ſunk into a ſoft ſlumber; from which however ſhe was unfortunately awakened by a noiſe immediately over her head. She ſtarted up, and exclaimed, "Good heavens! have they diſcovered "me?" for the terror of purſuit haunted her in dreams. Mrs. Bates, who was ſitting at work in the room, ſaid, "Oh "no, Madam; it is nobody coming

"near

" near us: I fancy 'tis ſome perſon up
" with a poor ſick man who lodges,
" with his family, on the next floor."
" Poor and ſick too!" replied Edelfrida,
ſighing deeply—" alas! then, his condi-
" tion is worſe than my own perhaps."
" Ah, dear Ma'am," returned Mrs.
" Bates, he would be very thankful if it
" were half as good as yours. If it were
" not for the charity of the people to
" whom the houſe belongs, he and his
" wife and children would now be lying
" in the ſtreets or in gaol: they won't turn
" the poor creatures out, becauſe he is
" ſo very ill; and they have not a ſhil-
" ling in the world, I fear, nor clothes
" to cover them; for they have been
" obliged to ſell what few things they
" had, to buy bread with." " O God
" of mercy!" cried Edelfrida, " is it poſ-
" ſible? But no, they ſhall not die for
" abſolute want," added ſhe; " I will
" relieve them: they ſhall ſhare with me
" the little pittance fortune has left
" me."

" me." Then riſing up, ſhe took out her pocket-book, in which there were two bank-notes, ten pounds each; being, with a few guineas in her purſe, the whole of her wordly poſſeſſions, exclusive of ſome trinkets which had been her mother's, a watch, and wardrobe, the greateſt part of which ſhe had left in St. James's Square. One of the notes ſhe took out; and putting up her pocket-book again, ſhe deſired Mrs. Bates would conduct her to the room, where ſhe might behold the wretchedneſs which would teach her to regard her own as a happy lot when compared with it. " I beg " pardon," replied Mrs. Bates; " but " indeed, Madam, you will be too much " ſhocked with a ſight of theſe unhappy " people. Shall I fetch the woman down " to you, if you wiſh to ſpeak to her?"— " No," ſaid Edelfrida, " I thank you " for your conſideration; but for ſor- " rowful, not lively ſcenes of pleaſure,

" my

" my mind is prepared at preſent. I " would not preſs upon misfortune, " were it out of my power to offer it " any alleviation; but that not being the " caſe now, I will, if you pleaſe, go up " with you: we will not call the poor " woman from her attendance on a " ſick huſband." Mrs. Bates making no further objection, Edelfrida followed her up ſtairs, but ſtopped a moment at the door of the room, till thoſe within were appriſed of their coming. She then ſtepped forward; but her feelings, on beholding a bed, the very emblem of poverty and wretchedneſs, ſtanding in one corner, with a figure ſtretched upon it more dead than alive, are not to be expreſſed: ſhe gazed in ſilent horror, for an inſtant, on the ſallow ghaſtly countenance before her; while on her, the miſerable wife and two meager ragged children fixed their eyes in wonder and awful expectation, for to them ſhe appeared more than mortal; and they

ventured

ventured not even to ſupplicate her compaſſion, ſuch was the reſpect her preſence inſpired them with. "O ye "powers of pity and humanity!" ſhe exclaimed, claſping her hands together, "what a picture is this! Unhappy crea- "tures," continued ſhe, turning from the bed to the woman and children, "poor unhappy creatures, how m heart "bleeds for you! Take this (preſenting "the bank-note), take it; and may hea- "ven ſend you comfort and relief, ere it "is exhauſted!" The woman, who held out her hand, expecting a couple of ſhillings perhaps, which ſhe would have received with a grateful heart, no ſooner caſt her eyes on the paper, than raiſing them inſtantly to Edelfrida's face, ſhe ſtared at her, as if doubtful whether all ſhe ſaw and heard was not a viſion; then burſting into an agony of tears, ſhe fell on her knees, and, in broken and inarticulate ſounds, poured forth the effuſions of ſurpriſe and gratitude. "An "angel"

" angel!" ſhe exclaimed; " come, my " children, kneel with me to the angel " who has preſerved us."—The children obeyed, ſtill looking on Edelfrida with awful admiration. " Riſe, I beg," returned ſhe, " riſe, and compoſe yourſelf: " it is ſo long that ye have been unkindly neglected, that every trifling " act of compaſſion and humanity ſurpriſes you. I wiſh it were in my power to deſerve your acknowledgments " by any material ſervice; for the preſent, however, that note will enable " you to provide ſomething for this " poor ſick man; and if Heaven reſtores " him to you, I ſhall conſider myſelf " the happy though humble inſtrument " of his preſervation, and as ſuch I ſhall " be amply rewarded." " Heaven, " Madam," replied the poor woman, who had by this time recovered herſelf a little, " Heaven will no doubt reward " you: we never can, though we ſhall " never ceaſe to pray for your happi-

neſs,

" neſs, or to regard you as our preſer-
" ver. Thus humbly and gratefully
" however let me thank you"—ſhe at-
tempted again to kneel; but Edelfrida
prevented her, ſaying, " Turn your at-
" tention to this invalid, I intreat you:
" ſee, he ſeems to be reviving; and that
" I may not further diſtreſs you, or en-
" gage your thoughts, I will retire,
" leaving with you my beſt wiſhes for
" your ſpeedy reſtoration to a more
" comfortable condition." They fol-
lowed her with their prayers and bleſ-
ings to the ſtairs, then returned to the
ſick man, to whom Mrs. Bates carried
up a little of the wine which was intend-
ed for Edelfrida; and when ſhe returned,
pleaſed her charitable and generous
gueſt, by an aſſurance that he would
ſoon be better, ſhe had no doubt, his
diſorder proceeding chiefly from unea-
ineſs of mind, and the want of proper
nouriſhment.—" We have done what we
" could for them," added ſhe; " but
" their

" their neceſſities were ſo great, that it
" was impoſſible for people who get
" their own living hardly enough, to
" relieve them much: both the man
" and woman to whom the houſe be-
" longs, as well as myſelf, have from
" time to time carried them things up,
" when, God help them, they had not
" a morſel of their own. But, alas!
" there was no ſuch thing as our pay-
" ing a doctor, or buying wine and
" phyſic for him, ſince he was ſo ill."
" Is there no ſuch thing," ſaid Edel-
frida, as getting proper relief for them,
" by making application to particular
" people, in ſuch a place as London?
" Are there not perſons appointed to take
" care that their fellow-creatures do not
" languiſh out life in ſuch extreme diſ-
" treſs; and that diſtreſs, probably, not
" the effect of idleneſs, ſo much as
" ſickneſs and misfortune?

" To be ſure, Madam," replied Mrs. Bates; " they might be relieved, no

" doubt;

" doubt; though, heaven knows, there
" are many families, I dare ſay, at this
" moment, pennyleſs: but thoſe above
" ſtairs are ſtrangers, and have ſeen
" better days, which makes it ſtill
" harder upon them. When firſt they
" came here, their appearance was very
" decent; and the room being let un-
" furniſhed, they brought ſome tole-
" rable things with them to put into
" it; but by little and little they have
" been growing worſe in the world, and
" have been obliged to pawn or ſell all
" the furniture, to the wretched bed
" which you ſaw Mr. Bennet laid on.
" They ſay he has met with many very
" great diſappointments in life, and
" came up to London in hopes of get-
" ting ſome ſmall place, which he had
" been promiſed; but great folks trou-
" ble themſelves little about their poor
" relations. So Mr. Bennet and his
" family might have ſtarved, but for
" your extraordinary kindneſs to them.

" I hope

" I hope he will ſoon be well now; and
" when he is able, he is very induſtrious,
" and can get a very pretty livelihood."
" Nothing juſt now," returned Edel-
" frida, could have given me ſo much
" ſatisfaction, as being inſtrumental to
" the relief of the indigent or unhappy;
" I rejoice that it was in my power."
Edelfrida now gave up all idea of ſleeping for that night. The ſcene ſhe had witneſſed, and the converſation it created afterward, had ſo effectually waked her, that ſhe waited for ſeven o'clock, in talking of and reflecting on the poor Bennets. About ſix ſhe forced herſelf to take a little breakfaſt; then ſent Mrs. Bates up ſtairs, to enquire how her fellow-lodgers went on; and ſhe had the pleaſure, ere ſhe ſet out, of hearing they were enjoying the comfortable hope of procuring food and nouriſhment for the invalid and themſelves, as ſoon as the morning was far enough advanced for the purpoſe; and that the ſick man, revived

vived and ſupported by the wine he had already taken, ſeemed more eaſy and compoſed, though he yet took no notice of what was paſſing about him.

About half paſt ſix the hackney-coach came, and Edelfrida prepared to get into it along with Mrs. Bates, and Moulſon behind: in this order ſhe reached the inn, from whence the ſtage was juſt ready to ſet out. She then again thanked her aſſiſtants, making them both a compenſation for the trouble they had been at on her account. The coach was empty; and ſhe ſtepped into it, not diſpleaſed to be at full liberty to indulge her own feelings and reflections on the journey, the end of which was known only to herſelf.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE coach no ſooner began to move, than Edelfrida recollected the journey ſhe had performed under ſuch different circumſtances, when ſhe entered London, with the two Mr. Evelynes for her companions and protectors. She now caſt a ſorrowful look on herſelf and round the ſhabby vehicle in which ſhe ſat: ſhe ſighed at the ſad reverſe which leſs than eight months had produced in her condition and proſpects; but that hope of which ſhe knew not the ſource, but which ſprings eternal in the human breaſt—breaking inſenſibly through the gathering ſhades of deſpair, preſerved her from falling the victim of her own acute ſenſibility, and truly mortifying ſituation.

When

When the coach ſtopped to breakfaſt, Edelfrida was conducted into a parlour, where ſhe found a woman whoſe appearance did not prejudice her very much in her favour; but who, ſhe ſoon underſtood, was to be her fellow-traveller. "You're come from London, I "ſuppoſe, Ma'am," ſaid this perſon, ſurveying Edelfrida from head to foot with an inquiſitive eye. "Yes, Ma'am," returned ſhe, ſeating herſelf on the oppoſite ſide the room. "Well, Ma'am," cried the ſtranger, not to be repulſed by the reſerved air and grave reply of Edelfrida, "I preſume you will have "no objection to a cup of tea, after "your ride. We muſt pay; ſo we may "as well refreſh ourſelves with a com-"fortable breakfaſt as not." "I thank "you," ſaid Edelfrida, "but I don't "chooſe any; I have breakfaſted." "For my part, I have not," exclaimed the other; "and my appetite being "pretty keen this fine morning, I "ſhall

" ſhall take my pennyworth for my " penny; and I think I ſhould not be " of your mind, if I come all the way " from London, though I had taken " an haſty cup of tea or coffee before " I ſet out; for I preſume you would " not have much time to ſpare this " morning: one's generally hurried out " of one's life, when one is to begin a " a journey." Edelfrida gave her no anſwer; but, not to be diſcouraged, ſhe proceeded, " Pray, Ma'am, may I " be ſo bold to enquire what part of " the town you came from?" " I don't " know," ſaid Edelfrida haughtily. " Dear me, that's odd; perhaps it is " not agreeable to tell." " Perhaps " not," was all the reply ſhe obtained. A ſignificant ſmile then ſat on the features of this curious ſtranger; to develop the meaning of which, Edelfrida did not give herſelf any trouble; but wholly unaccuſtomed to the impertinent familiarity of ignorance, ſhe felt proudly

indignant at the liberties a total and vulgar ſtranger was taking with her, rendered, perhaps, more ſenſitive by her ſituation. The coach being again ready, Edelfrida and her new companion took their places in it, and purſued their journey with expedition, the roads being good, the horſes more able than uſual, and the carriage not heavy laden. Edelfrida gave her fellow-traveller little opportunity of renewing her converſation for the firſt three or four miles; for ſhe fixed, or appeared to fix, her attention on the objects on the outſide the coach: but at length her head growing giddy, and her eyes aching with gazing ſo intently on moving ſcenes, ſhe was compelled to withdraw them; and her loquacious companion did not ſuffer the time to paſs in ſilence, from the inſtant ſhe obſerved that Edelfrida no longer looked through the window. "Very pleaſant travelling now, Miſs; "for I conclude from your looks, that

"you

" you are not married yet—A very
" handſome good coach this we are in;
" but I ſuppoſe you may have been in
" it before now: perhaps, you are go-
" ing to viſit your friends for a while—
" One likes to get out of London a
" bit, if one can, eſpecially if one lives
" in a cloſe part, and is much confined
" by buſineſs; is that your caſe, Miſs?"
Edelfrida caſt a look of ineffable diſ-
dain on her vulgar and inſenſible com-
panion; who, perceiving it, ſaid, " I
" beg pardon, Miſs—may be, you are
" not in buſineſs; indeed, I dare ſay
" you have no occaſion for it, for you
" look very genteel; but then, I've
" ſeen very genteel people in buſineſs
" too; ſo I meant no offence." Edel-
frida now began to feel that ſhe had no
right to be angry at, though ſhe might
be teazed by this woman's ignorant ob-
ſervations. She might with equal juſ-
tice quarrel with herſelf for not being
an empreſs; that being as much in her

own power, as it was in the other's to conquer the habits of education, which were become nature in her, and to ſubſtitute delicacy of ſentiment and refinement of manners in the place of thoſe which ſo diſguſted the young and beautiful traveller, who had hitherto been effectually guarded from all intimacy with the lower claſs of people, conſequently could make fewer allowances for their exceſſive forwardneſs, which is the offspring of ignorance. A pauſe enſued: for the ſtranger, though not conquered by Edelfrida's angry glance, yet thought proper to let her get the better of the diſpleaſure ſhe ſo evidently felt, ere ſhe made another effort to gratify her curioſity; which before ſhe durſt again attempt, the coach ſtopped to dine. Edelfrida lamented in her own mind the neceſſity there was for ſubmitting to this delay: as to herſelf, dinner was by no means a deſirable ſight, not having the ſmalleſt inclination to partake of it; but

but her companion was of a different opinion, therefore haſtened into the room where it was prepared. Edelfrida ſlowly and reluctantly followed, and found herſelf, ere ſhe was aware of it, ſurrounded by ſeveral other ſtrangers, who came in the coach ſhe was to proceed in, and were going on to London. She would inſtantly have retreated, ſhocked at the thoughts of herding with a ſet of ſtrange-looking dirty travellers; but the waiter aſſured her there was not a vacant room in the houſe: ſhe was therefore obliged to ſeat herſelf at the table, as a leſs likely way of creating obſervation than ſitting by herſelf at a diſtance from it. She had ſcarcely taken her place, ere more people entered the room; and, to her infinite ſurpriſe and vexation, ſhe recogniſed her old acquaintance Miſs Miller, who had been in the country with the friends ſhe was now returning to London with. "Gracious "goodneſs!" exclaimed Miſs Miller,

" can I believe my eyes? Good law! " well, I declare I am ſo ſurpriſed, Miſs " Edelfrida, you can't think! well, who " would ever have thought of meet- " ing you here, of all the birds in the " air?"---" Tis very unexpected," replied Edelfrida, colouring, ſtammering, and extremely confuſed. " I proteſt," cried Miſs Miller, " I am very glad to " ſee you, though I was ſo ſorry, you " can't believe, that I went out of town " juſt after you came up with Sir Edward " and my Lady. I hope they are well."-- " Very well, I am obliged to you," ſaid Edelfrida, in a fever leſt ſhe ſhould inform all the people preſent who ſhe was; and they were gaping for the expected intelligence, particularly her fellow-traveller.

" Come, come, ladies," ſaid a man who looked anxiouſly at a piece of beef, which the perſon who ſat next to it could not carve, he was ſo intent on liſtening, " ſit down, I ſay; and when you

" have ſatisfied your hunger, then ſatisfy
" one another's curioſity: ſuch light food
" is out of time and place now; I am for
" all things in time and place, do ye ſee--
" And come, Sir, (addreſſing himſelf
" to him who ſat near the beef) do your
" office, and let us taſte that fine roaſt
" beef, the glory of old England."—
" Well, but my dear Miſs Edelfrida,"
exclaimed Miſs Miller, taking the next
chair to her, and ſeizing her hand, " do
" tell me what brought you here, and
" let that there gentleman eat his roaſt-
" beef; but for my part, I am dying with
" impatience to hear your ſtory." " My
" ſtory," ſaid Edelfrida, " is nothing
" more than that I am going to ſee an
" old friend in the country for a ſhort
" time." " Well, upon my word!" re-
plied Miſs Miller, not ſatisfied by this
account— " but I ſhould not have ex-
" pected to meet you alone, and travelling
" in the ſtage; beſides, I heard you were
" going to be married to a great Nabob:

" ſo, thinks I, ſhe has forſaken you " know who, then."—" You were miſ- " informed," returned Edelfrida. " Well " then, where is Mr. Henry? do you " know?" continued ſhe, putting on a melancholy look—" I have never once " ſeen his charming brother ſince you " left us."—" I fancy he has not been " in London lately," replied Edelfrida. " Oh, he is a delightful man, don't you " think ſo? but, good gracious! how ſilly " I am, aſking you ſuch queſtions! No, " no; Mr. Henry is your favourite, all " to nothing: though, do you know, I " have wondered at it; for if you will " forgive me, I will ſay, I don't think " him half ſo affable, or ſo handſome " either, as his brother."—" Many " men of many minds," ſaid the man who had called ſo loudly for the roaſt " beef—" ſo the ſame by you ladies, " I ſuppoſe, Miſs; now your friend " there looks as if ſhe might have her " choice as ſoon as another—don't you think

" think ſo, Sir?" ſpeaking to his neighbour, who looked like a pert London apprentice—" Why yes, Sir, really that's " my opinion, I muſt confeſs: the young " lady, I ſhould imagine, might make " her election without danger of being " thrown out by a candidate with ſupe- " rior pretentions: one ſhall ſeldom ſee " more qualifications than ſhe ſeems " poſſeſſed of, with ſubmiſſion to the " reſt of the fair ladies preſent." Edelfrida, provoked to be thus made the ſubject of converſation, and the object of obſervation, coloured deeply with ſhame and vexation, and ſecretly wiſhed herſelf on a barren mountain, rather than in ſuch a ſet of company.—" Fy, Sir!" exclaimed one who ſat at the head of the table, " you diſtreſs the lady; I beg " the ſubject may be changed."—" Good law! how theſe people love to " hear themſelves talk!" ſaid Miſs Miller in a low voice to Edelfrida—" and " they won't let me aſk a thouſand queſ-

" tions I am expiring to hear anſwered."
" Some other time," replied Edelfrida with quickneſs: " this is not a place " for communication, nor will the time " admit of it." " Bleſs me, how you " talk! who knows when I ſhall ſee you " again? perhaps not this month; and do " you think I can wait all that while, " for what I want to hear this minute? " Tell me how you got rid of the Na- " bob, and where Mr. Henry you know " what is."—" Indeed," ſaid Edelfrida, ready to cry at the mortification ſhe was expoſed to, " I can give you no in- " formation on either ſubject."—" Well, " I declare I never ſaw the like," cried Miſs Miller: " ſo you won't tell me any " thing? well, you are very ill-natured, " that is all I ſay. However I won't be " ſo ill-natured to you; for I will cer- " tainly ſend to let Sir Edward and my " Lady know that you are ſo far ſafe. " I ſuppoſe I may aſk where you are " going; that can be no ſecret." Edel-

frida,

frida, terrified by her promiſe of ſending to her uncle's, to acquaint them of her ſafety, and confuſed beyond meaſure at her queſtion, knew not what to reply; at length ſhe got out, "Indeed, I don't-- "that is, I cannot abſolutely ſay where "I am going." The heſitating manner in which ſhe ſpoke, together with her embarraſſed air, raiſed Miſs Miller's curioſity ſtill more; and ſhe exclaimed, Bleſs "me! not know where you are going! "how can that poſſibly be, Miſs Edel- "frida?"—"Oh," returned Edelfrida, attempting in vain to look unconcerned, "I did not mean to ſay, I could not tell "where I was going, only I have for- "gotten the name of the place this mi- "nute."—"And ſuppoſe," ſaid Miſs Miller, "you don't recollect it at all, "what will you do then?"—"Why "then," replied ſhe, "it is of no con- "ſequence; my friend is to meet me "on the road, and I ſhall learn it from "her."—"Now I proteſt I believe you

" are telling fibbs all this time, Miſs " Edelfrida," ſaid Miſs Miller; " but " I can gueſs—we ſhall have a para- " graph in the newſpaper, I dare ſay, " very ſoon, which will tell tales, though " you won't—Such a day was married " Miſs —." " You are quite miſtaken," replied Edelfrida, interrupting her--- " and I muſt beg you will not take " the unneceſſary trouble of ſending " to my uncle's; there is no occaſion; " that is, I don't wiſh to"—" to let " them know where you are going," exclaimed Miſs Miller, ere ſhe could finiſh the ſentence. " Well, I under- " ſtand you; then you may depend upon " me." Edelfrida, finding ſhe ſtill per- ſiſted in the miſtake, was too weary to attempt convincing her further; and thinking it even better ſhe ſhould re- main in it, than ſend to St. James's Square with intelligence of her, ſhe remained ſilent; and the waiter came to collect his money, and inform the travellers

travellers the coaches were ready ſoon after: ſo that nothing further paſſed, except that Miſs Miller embraced Edelfrida, with all the ardour of friendſhip, which the other conſtrained herſelf to return at all; and then ſhe performed her part with a coldneſs which could not have eſcaped one leſs occupied with herſelf than Miſs Miller. Leaving the inn, and all whom it contained, with a mental wiſh never to ſee it or its preſent inhabitants more, Edelfrida re-aſcended the coach; and in addition to her old companion, ſhe found that a man of a moſt grazier-like appearance was to fill one of the vacant ſeats. Mirth was far from her heart, and her pride was too much piqued to ſuffer her to enjoy the variety which to many perſons is productive of the moſt humorous entertainment; but bred in the lap of elegance, Edelfrida could not diveſt herſelf for an inſtant of that potent delicacy which ſhrinks at the approach of rude

fami-

familiarity, or the ludicrous attempts at wit in low-life: nothing therefore could be more comfortleſs than her ſituation, in a ſtage-coach, in company with two people who underſtood each other extremely well, but who by her could never be ſufficiently endured to be underſtood. Neither did her reſerve pleaſe them; they took it for pride and impertinence, and were reſolved to expreſs their diſapprobation of what they ſtyled ſaucy airs.—"Well, Sir," ſaid the "inquiſitive traveller," as ſoon as the coach began to move, "I am very glad "we have got an addition to our party; "for this here lady is not much given "to talk; and it's very dull travelling "a whole day without hearing the "ſound of a voice."—"Very indeed, "Ma'am, very," replied the man; "for "my part, I always ſtrive to make myſelf and my ſituation quite agreeable "on theſe occaſions; for why? you know "one might as well be pleaſed as not;

it

" it comes all to the ſame thing in the " end: the coach goes on its own rate; " and whether we within are in good " or bad humour, it makes no odds at " laſt. So, young lady," continued he, " cheer up your ſpirits, and ſing us a " ſong; for I ſee by your face that you " can ſing." He ſeconded this requeſt with a facetious laugh, and an hearty ſhake by the hand, which he ſuddenly ſeized. Edelfrida haſtily and angrily withdrew her hand, but did not deign to reply: this ſilent repulſe only created a louder laugh at her expence. " Peo- " ple ſometimes put on quality-airs " where they are not known," ſaid he: to which his other fellow-traveller an- ſwered, " Oh, it's a good opportunity of " practiſing the fine lady, when it " won't do at home, you know."—" Yes, " yes, it's all fair, Miſs; never mind," cried the man, " you have got a very " pretty face, and, I warrant, have had " a great many pretty things ſaid to you:

ſo

" ſo no wonder if you be a little nice,
" and not quite ſo free as your more
" homely folks," winking ſignificantly at his neighbour.--- " Handſome is as
" handſome does, ſay I," returned the woman, who was angry that ſhe could not diſcover who Edelfrida was, where ſhe was going to, or from what part of London ſhe came. " Upon my word," ſaid Edelfrida, at length provoked to ſpeak,
" you do me infinitely too much honour
" by making me the ſubject of your
" converſation: I ſhould think there
" could not be any thing leſs intereſt-
" ing; and I recommend that to your
" notice and obſervation, which you
" may have ſome ſmall chance of com-
" prehending; as for me, I am quite
" inexplicable, I aſſure you." She accompanied this ſpeech with a contemptuous ſmile, ſhe could not repreſs; and they looked upon one another in ſurpriſe, at this unexpected proof of ſpirit, which from her general melancholy air,

and

and total ſilence, they had not thought her poſſeſſed of. "What, Miſs!" replied the man, recovering from his aſtoniſhment, "muſt we neither talk with you, nor of "you? Nay, now, you are cruel; for I am "ſure we could not chooſe a handſomer "ſubject for our diſcourſe."—"You "can't chooſe one more diſagreeable "to me," ſaid Edelfrida. "That's odd "enough too, Miſs," returned he: "moſt "women like to be talked about, eſ"pecially when they know themſelves "to be beauties." Edelfrida found that oppoſition only rendered him more more obſtinately bent on his purpoſe; ſo ſhe reſolved quietly to let him go on at his leiſure, comforting herſelf that ere long ſhe ſhould be releaſed from her irkſome ſituation. The coach ſtopped only once more, ere ſhe was to leave it; and ſhe anxiouſly enquired of the coachman, how far it was to ——— : he gave her the pleaſing information that it was only five miles further. "So, Miſs,"

ſaid

ſaid her fellow-travellers, both in a breath, "in leſs than an hour we ſhall loſe "your agreeable company." Edelfrida, enlivened by the proſpect of ſpeedy releaſe, could not help ſmiling at the ſarcaſm conveyed in the laſt ſpeech: ſhe could by no means accuſe herſelf of having been agreeable; ſhe therefore felt that her companions might with juſtice complain of her, had it been any part of her agreement, when ſhe took her place, to be entertaining. At length the coach drove into the inn-yard; and ready to receive her, ſtood Mrs. Williams.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IMPATIENTLY Edelfrida waited till the coach-door was opened, and ſhe could diſengage herſelf from it; then, juſt as ſhe was about to alight, ſhe turned to the two people, who ſat ſtill till ſhe had deſcended—"I ſhall "no longer be any reſtraint upon your "converſation; and I hope you will "perform your journey in ſafety, and "according to your own ideas of agree-"able, which you ſeem both ſo well in-"clined to be." She then lightly ſprang out of the carriage; and in the next moment ſeized Mrs. Williams by the hand, who led her into a parlour ſhe had ſecured. Here Edelfrida embraced her good old friend and ſervant, to whom, for ſome time at leaſt, ſhe was

to

to be indebted for an aſylum. "My "dear lady," cried Mrs. Williams, "what joy it would be to ſee you, if "I could hope you were happy as you "ſhould be! but you look pale and "thin; you are in tears too. Oh, what "a ſad day is this, that I ſhould ever "live to ſee it!" "My kind, affec-"tionate friend," replied Edelfrida, ſtruggling with her feelings, "do "not afflict yourſelf; I ſhall yet be well "and happy, with a little of your aſ-"ſiſtance." "My aſſiſtance!" ex-"claimed ſhe, "heaven knows I would "lay down my life to preſerve yours: "only command me then; I am ſtill "your faithful ſervant, your ſincere, "though humble friend." "You "are," ſaid Edelfrida ſighing, "the "only friend I have on earth to whom "I can or will apply in this hour of "my neceſſities: ſit down, and I will "tell you all that has befallen me ſince "I loſt you." "No, Madam," re-

plied

plied Mrs. Williams, " let me ſtand: " I can now treat you as my beloved " and reſpected miſtreſs. When at " Walton Park, if you ſtill chooſe to " appear as my niece there, I muſt take " liberties with you, that will go near " to break my heart: for this time let " me do my duty then." " No, Wil- " liams," ſaid Edelfrida; " if you would " oblige me, do as I deſire you; ſit " down, and from henceforth endea- " vour to forget that I am not your " niece." Mrs. Williams, not to irri- tate the already-haraſſed mind of Edel- frida, did as ſhe requeſted, and with tears and ſighs liſtened to the recital of what had reduced her to the neceſſity of begging a retreat with or near her. The good old woman heard it all with grief and indignation, and vowed, while ſhe had a farthing, or was able to work, her ever-dear Miſs Dudley ſhould never want a friend. She then aſked leave to order tea; to which Edelfrida con-

ſented

ſented; for not having touched any thing ſince ſhe left London, except a bit of bread and a glaſs of water, ſhe began to feel faint and fatigued. Mrs. Williams ſat down to tea reluctantly; but Edelfrida would have it ſo; and during the time they ſettled by what name ſhe ſhould be called at Walton Park, as her own was too remarkable to eſcape obſervation in the family: it was then agreed that ſhe ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by the name of Lucy Williams. This point adjuſted, and having drunk their tea, a man was hired to carry Edelfrida's cloaths; and ſhe ſet out with Mrs. Williams to Walton Park, which was merely acroſs the great road, and through a plantation belonging to Lord Walton, and was a ſhorter road to the houſe which ſhe entered, not a little pleaſed to find herſelf at her journey's end. Mrs. Williams conducted her directly into her own room, that ſhe might avoid for that night

night the obſervation of the ſervants; the bed-chamber where ſhe herſelf ſlept, being through the houſekeeper's room; and Edelfrida begged to occupy half her bed. Lord and Lady Walton were not at home; ſo that Edelfrida had nothing to apprehend from being ſeen at preſent; as the domeſtics who were in the houſe, ſeldom went out of it to any of the places where by chance ſhe might have appeared as Sir Edward Dudley's niece. Beſides, ſhe had taken care to render her figure and dreſs as ſuitable to her preſent condition as poſſible: her hair was unpowdered; her caps cloſe to her face, and ſimple in their form; in ſhort, ſhe had as much as poſſible diveſted herſelf of that air of faſhion, which ſhe had put on upon going firſt to town: but not all her endeavours could diveſt her of that air of dignified ſweetneſs, that inimitable gracefulneſs of perſon and manners, which nature had beſtowed ſo abundantly upon her; neither could

ſhe

ſhe conceal the ſtriking beauties of her form and face; on the contrary, the neat ſimplicity ſhe now adopted ſeemed to heighten every charm. Mrs. Williams, ever tenderly attached to her, and conſidering her as her own child, with grief beheld her in a ſituation ſo little correſponding with her pretenſions in life; and as ſhe ſat looking upon her, as on the faireſt work of the creation, ſhe frequently turned aſide to wipe off the tears which, unbidden, ſtarted into her eyes. Edelfrida, when ſhe found herſelf quietly ſeated at Walton Park, began to experience in no common degree the wearineſs her journey, and want of reſt for many nights before it, naturally occaſioned; ſhe therefore deſired to retire to bed early. Her worthy friend having provided her with a ſupper calculated to pleaſe and court an appetite too delicate for ordinary food, and prevailing on her to take a little, if not to gratify hunger, at leaſt to ſupport nature

ture; then conducted her to her room, where every thing had been attended to, in order to render it comfortable and convenient; reſerving no accommodation in it for herſelf, ſave, at Edelfrida's requeſt, half the bed. Here Mrs. Williams being at liberty to reſume that character in which it was her wiſh to appear on all occaſions, with reſpect to her young miſtreſs, ſhe inſiſted upon again performing the part of a waiting-maid to her dear Miſs Dudley; a reſolution which Edelfrida in vain oppoſed. Extreme fatigue ſoon ſhed over the ſenſes of Edelfrida, a repoſe deep and heavy: it put to flight for the time being every uneaſy ſenſation, calmed the anguiſh of her ſwelling heart, and baniſhed not only preſent pains, but the ſad proſpect of future miſery and misfortune.

When ſhe opened her eyes the next morning, ſhe caſt them round the room

for a moment, without being able to recollect where ſhe was, every thing wearing a ſtrange face to her bewildered ideas: but when ſufficiently awake to know her ſituation perfectly, ſhe was grateful to heaven for having conducted her in ſafety to a place where ſhe was in no danger of being ſacrificed to the ambition and avarice, or to the reſentment of her unfeeling relations. She remembered, indeed, Maria's many kindneſſes, with fond regret that they might perhaps never meet again. She could not think on an eternal ſeparation from this beloved and amiable friend, without weeping bitterly. Mrs. Williams ſurpriſed her in the midſt of this ſorrowful indulgence, in which with the trueſt ſympathy ſhe joined: for, though her underſtandanding was naturally good, ſhe had not acquired that firmneſs of mind which checks the dangerous encouragement of a weakneſs which enervates and deſtroys the mind.

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In the midſt of her affliction, Edelfrida was pleaſed to find a friend who would weep and lament with her; but, when her better judgement prevailed, ſhe ſaw the conſequences of giving way to ſorrow, in their true light; and reſolved, if poſſible, to combat this enemy to her repoſe, with all the ſtrength of reaſon and reflection, and with a pious and patient ſubmiſſion to the Divine will which thought fit to afflict her. The principles of religion had been early and carefully inſtilled into her mind; and though ſhe had hitherto lived but little in the habit of practiſing the duties it enjoins, ſhe nevertheleſs reverenced the doctrine of Chriſtianity, and in her heart worſhipped the divine ſource of all our comforts here, and all our hopes hereafter. When Edelfrida was dreſſed, ſhe accompanied Mrs. Williams into the next room, having been previouſly informed that the houſe-ſteward was the only perſon admitted to breakfaſt, din-

ner, and ſupper in it, except Mrs. Manſel, Lady Walton's own woman, now abſent with her lady. Mrs. Williams made many ſcruples about ſetting Edelfrida down with ſuch improper companions; but added, "that Mr. "Evans, the ſteward, was an elderly "ſenſible man, who would not offend "her by any familiarity whatever." "My good friend," replied Edelfrida, "make no apologies to me: I muſt "learn to forget I had ever any pre-"tenſions above my preſent ſtate. It "would ill become one reduced to "beggary as I am, to object to mix "with people much more reſpectable "in their condition, than many I have "hitherto aſſociated with in higher life. "I have only to requeſt that you will "remember I am your niece, and "not treat me with a reſpect which "would be very ſuſpicious, and create "doubts to the diſadvantage of both "of us." Mrs. Williams promiſed

ſhe

ſhe would not; and they then joined Mr. Evans, who was waiting for his breakfaſt in the outer room. Edelfrida was inſtantly ſtruck with veneration for this old man, whoſe placid countenance and white locks rendered him an object of reſpect to all beholders. He ſpoke to Edelfrida, as to Mrs. Williams's niece, with great civility; welcomed her to Walton Park, and expreſſed his hopes that ſhe might find country air and gentle exerciſe of benefit to her health; for her aunt had told him, what her looks, he was ſorry to ſay, confirmed, that ſhe was not quite well. "Mrs. "Williams," added he, "is no great "walker; ſo that, if I thought an old "man's company would be acceptable, "I would offer my ſervices to attend "you in a little ſtroll, now and then, "through the plantations in the Park." Edelfrida thanked him, and accepted his offer, merely to eſcape from the torment of her own reflections, if poſſible.

As ſoon as breakfaſt was over, Mr. Evans ſaid, " he had a little buſineſs " to tranſact; which being done, he " would call in, and attend Edelfrida " as they had propoſed." In the mean time Mrs. Williams carried her round the houſe, in order to divert her. It was a handſome, ancient manſion, large, convenient, and pleaſantly ſituated: the apartments were ſpacious, and furniſhed in a modern and very elegant taſte. There was a charming library, and a gallery which ſupplied amuſement to all who had any reliſh for the arts and ſciences; muſical inſtruments of ſeveral ſorts; a port-feuille, filled with beautiful and valuable prints. Some fine paintings adorned one ſide; and a few ſtatues admirably executed were placed to advantage on the other. All the modern publications, ſuited to every taſte, were to be found in this delightful gallery; in which, while the family were abſent, Edelfrida promiſed herſelf

ſelf a reſource againſt languor and melancholy. And here Mrs. Williams left her till Mr. Evans ſhould call upon her to walk, while ſhe went about her houſehold concerns. Muſic is ſaid to be the food of love: Edelfrida, therefore, unwiſely ſat down to a grand piano-forte, and called forth ſounds of ſuch ſoft ſorrow, as too well accorded with the mournful habit of her ſoul. She " dropped the ſadly pleaſing tear," over her own ſtrains; and all the nobler faculties of her mind were abſorbed in love and anguiſh: her latter reſolutions were all forgotten; and neither poverty, nor its attendant evils, appeared half ſo terrible in her imagination, as the loſt affection of the faithleſs Henry.

Mrs. Williams's return, to tell her Mr. Evans was waiting to walk with her, rouſed her from this fatal indulgence of her griefs; and haſtily wiping the tears which robbed her eyes of their native luſtre, ſhe compoſed herſelf as well

as ſhe could, and prepared to attend Mr. Evans into the Park. During their walk he pointed out to her the beauties of the place, ſpoke of his Lord and Lady in terms of praiſe and gratitude; and expreſſed his friendſhip for Mrs. Williams, which her zeal and fidelity in her place, her quiet temper and charitable diſpoſition, had created: he aſſured Edelfrida, whom he called Miſs Lucy, that her aunt was ſettled for life, unleſs her own inclination led her to change her ſituation. "My Lord and "Lady," ſaid he, "never part with "their ſervants till they prove them "unworthy their kindneſs and con-"fidence, which I am convinced my "good friend and fellow-ſervant will "never be." He then ſaid, "We ex-"pect a young lady here ſoon, a Miſs "Montague: my Lord is her guardian. "She is very good and very rich, and "as well beloved here as if ſhe was "their own daughter; ſhe is returning

from

" from a tour ſhe has taken with ſome " of her own relations in France and " Italy. But this is her home, ſo long " as ſhe is ſingle: that, to be ſure, will " not be long; for ſhe is handſome, and " has a very fine fortune, being the " only child and heireſs of the late " Sir Charles Montague." Edelfrida liſtened to this diſcourſe out of civility, becauſe it was intended to amuſe her; not that it did, but ſhe had too much genuine good-nature to be abſent or ſupercilious to thoſe who merited her reſpect, or took pains to oblige her, notwithſtanding they might fail to give her pleaſure. It was only where ſhe encountered inſult, neglect, or impertinence, that ſhe felt any inclination to retort. After a walk, which neither fatigued nor diverted her, ſhe returned to the houſe, and ſpent the reſt of the day in working or converſing with Mrs. Williams and Mr. Evans, who was ſo

much pleaſed with her, that he ſtaid longer than uſual after dinner, and after tea, to enjoy her company. It was painful to her to exert herſelf; yet ſhe determined to do ſo, as much as poſſible, to calm the apprehenſions of her kind friend Mrs. Williams, and to repay the well-meant attentions of the good ſteward—attentions ſuch as a father might beſtow on a favourite child; for ſhe had intereſted him wonderfully in her welfare; and he daily preſcribed ſome little recipe for low ſpirits, and ſome ſlight complaints which appeared to have a conſumptive tendency; but alas! the malady was on the mind; and he could not

" Miniſter to a mind diſeas'd,
" Nor pluck the rooted ſorrow from the brain."

To Edelfrida, therefore, his medicines were of no effect; yet ſhe was grateful to him.

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In this manner a fortnight paſſed away; but, excluded from all intercourſe with the world ſhe had left, Edelfrida remained ignorant of what occurred in it.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ABOUT the end of this fortnight Mrs. Williams received a letter from Mrs. Manſel, Lady Walton's woman, to inform her that in the courſe of another week the family would be at Walton Park, accompanied by Miſs Montague, who wanted a maid, and had given her directions to enquire for one in the country. The qualifications ſhe required were, gentle and modeſt manners, great neatneſs, and honeſty; to have ſome notion of millinery and fine works, and attention and regularity in the care of whatever was committed to her. She was neither required to dreſs hair, nor get up linen; Miſs Montague having a French ſervant who did the former, and chooſing to have the latter done

done by the people who undertake it for hire, rather than have her own maid ſo employed, when ſhe might want her for other things, and to wait upon her perſon. Mr. Evans brought this letter in his hand when he came to breakfaſt; and Mrs. Williams read it aloud. Edelfrida, who had paid great attention to the contents, exclaimed, "I wiſh Miſs Mon-
"tague would try me."—"You, Miſs
"Lucy!" ſaid Mr. Evans, ſmiling—
"why, bleſs me! Miſs Montague would
"think Mrs. Williams and I had taken
"a journey to the upper regions, in
"ſearch of an attendant for her, ſhould
"we preſent you in that character."
Edelfrida could not help half-laughing at the old man's gallantry, but ſtill perſiſted in wiſhing that ſhe might be mentioned to Miſs Montague as one who would cheerfully ſupply her want of ſkill, by diligence and attention. Mrs. Williams, with a tear ſtarting into her eye, replied, "You ſurely are not ſerious,

my

" my dear?"—" I never was more ſo," ſaid Edelfrida; " and I expect to be " preferred by you, in a recommenda- " tion, before any other perſon. If Miſs " Montague is what Mr. Evans de- " ſcribes her, ſhe will not mu nur at " receiving into her ſervice one not al- " together qualified to perform her part " exactly well at firſt, when ſhe knows " that as an orphan, without any pro- " viſion, I have ſome ſmall claim on " her benevolence."—" But, my dear," cried Mrs Williams, " I think I can " propoſe a better ſcheme for you than " going to ſervice with your delicate " health: we can get a lodging for you " in this neighbourhood at a comforta- " ble farm-houſe, where you will have " your time to yourſelf; and as to the " expence, we can manage that very ea- " ſily."---" No," returned Edelfrida, " I have no right, by living in idleneſs, " to treſpaſs on a fund which your in- " duſtry has raiſed. Preſerve it againſt

the

" the hour of neceſſity, from which we " are none of us exempt. I am young; " and I will at leaſt make an effort to " provide for myſelf." Mr. Evans looked at Edelfrida earneſtly as ſhe ſpoke: his ſurpriſe was only equalled by his admiration of her. " I applaud your " reſolution," ſaid he; " 'tis not more " ſenſible, than juſt and good; and if " you really wiſh to be recommended " to Miſs Montague, I will write my- " ſelf, and ſay every thing I think of you " with truth and ſincerity; and I believe " I know the young lady in queſtion well " enough to anſwer for her, that ſhe " will accept your offered ſervices with " pleaſure, though perhaps you may " not be ſo expert in the buſineſs of a " waiting-woman as ſome others who " have been bred to it; for, if I were " to judge from appearances, I ſhould " conclude you were born to be at- " tended on, rather than to attend on " others."---" Appearances," replied Edel-

Edelfrida, forcing a ſmile, "are fre-
"quently deceitful; but," continued
ſhe, "you will then promiſe me to write
"in my behalf?"—"Certainly I will, if
"you deſire me to do ſo," ſaid he. "I
"am impatient," replied ſhe, "for em-
"ployment: I am ſure I ſhould ſoon be
"perfectly well, if I had any thing to
"do which would take my thoughts
"off my complaints: they are more
"imaginary than real, I am perſuaded;
"and idleneſs is the parent of all evil,
"you know, Sir."—"Indeed I believe
"it is," returned Mr. Evans: "not that
"I can charge you with that fault, for
"you are always buſy about ſome nice
"work or other."—"But a little va-
"riety," ſaid ſhe, "would amuſe me;
"and I can have nothing to fear from
"Miſs Montague's proving unreaſona-
"ble, or treating me with the caprice
"of a fine lady. I ſhould indeed de-
"ſpair of pleaſing, if that were her cha-
"racter: as it is, I ſhall enter her ſervice,

if

" if ſhe has the goodneſs to receive me,
" without dread, though with no great
" confidence in myſelf: on her I ſhall
" place my dependence; and her pa-
" tience and conſideration will give me
" courage to conquer all difficulties."
" Well, well," ſaid Mr. Evans, riſing from breakfaſt, " I will promiſe you
" ſucceſs in your application."—" And
" you will write this very day?" replied Edelfrida. " I will," returned he; " ne-
" ver fear."

When he was gone out of the room, Mrs. Williams could contain no longer; but falling on her knees at Edelfrida's feet, ſhe burſt forth into tears and lamentation, at the ſtrange reſolution her beloved miſtreſs had made, conjuring her to give it up ere it was too late. " Riſe,
" my good old friend," ſaid Edelfrida,
" and ceaſe to diſtreſs yourſelf and me:
" ſuffer me to convince you of the pro-
" priety of the ſtep I am going to take,
" that you may no longer oppoſe it, in vain;

" vain; for I declare to you that I am " determined." Mrs. Williams roſe up; and Edelfrida then repreſented to her the injuſtice of ſpending that money which ſhe had been enabled honeſtly to ſave in the courſe of long ſervices. " I " hope and believe you will never want " it," continued ſhe; " but as it is not " impoſſible that you may, what a mon- " ſter ſhould I be, to diſſipate it! What " comfort could I offer either myſelf or " you, ſhould poverty or ſickneſs over- " take your old age, after I had ſquan- " dered what would have preſerved " you from the former and ſoothed the " pains of the latter? No—I am incapa- " ble of ſuch vileneſs; I ſhould deteſt " myſelf, if I thought I was not. I " might loſe you too, when I had ſpent " all. What then would become of me, " friendleſs, deſtitute, and helpleſs? " From long habit my condition would " then be truly deplorable indeed." " But how can I bear," cried Mrs. Wil- liams, " how can I endure to ſee you,

who

" who were born to a far different for-
" tune, you who have been bred with
" care and tenderneſs, and never uſed to
" do any thing unbecoming your birth
" and education? It will break my heart
" to ſee you ſubject to any body's com-
" mands, though I believe Miſs Mon-
" tague is a very good lady." " How
" much better, my good friend," replied Edelfrida, " to ſee me in a ſafe and credi-
" table ſituation, than to behold me re-
" duced to poverty and deſpair, by a falſe
" pride! You ſee me innocent, and con-
" tent with myſelf, if not affluent and
" happy: my conſcious heart ſhall ap-
" prove the ſacrifice I have made to pre-
" ſerve myſelf from becoming the ſlave
" of ambition, and the wife of a man I
" deteſt; and I ſhall ceaſe to repine at my
" deſtiny, as I inſenſibly taſte that peace
" of mind which ſprings from rectitude
" of intention. Be convinced that for
" once at leaſt I am right."

" Well, my dear lady," returned Mrs. Williams, ſighing, " I ſubmit; though I would

" would gladly part with my laſt far-
" thing, to have ſaved you from a ſitu-
" ation ſo little befitting you. Oh!
" good God!" ſhe exclaimed, " what
" would my poor dear maſter, or your
" ſweet mother, my ever-honoured miſ-
" treſs, ſay, if they could behold their
" darling child reduced to this? The
" thoughts of it will kill me."—" Hold,
" in pity to yourſelf and me," ſaid Edel-
frida: " mention thoſe dear and ever-to-
" be-lamented parents no more; yet
" ſurely," added ſhe with pious fervour,
" if they are conſcious of what is paſſing
" in this lower world, they will ſmile
" on their unhappy child, when they ſee
" her determined to caſt her follies from
" her, and ſeriouſly attempt to atone
" for errors paſt, by a faithful diſcharge
" of the duties of a ſtation to which ſhe
" is now called: 'tis a weary pilgrimage
" at beſt, my friend," ſaid ſhe. " I have
" experienced that happineſs does not
" reſide with the rich and great: why

may

" may I not then expect to find it in a " more humble degree? There can be no " harm in ſearching for it every where, " except in guilt and ſhame." The enthuſiaſm of Edelfrida's temper, together with that ſmall tincture of romance which in many inſtances made her think and act unlike the generality of people, now ſuſtained her ſpirits under the humiliating idea of ſervitude, at which her pride might otherwiſe have revolted, and enabled her to prepare with alacrity for engaging in her new character; as Mr. Evans aſſured her, ere the anſwer arrived, that he had no doubt of her being accepted. She therefore ſet about altering her clothes into a plainer faſhion, and making every thing belonging to her wear the appearance of what ſhe was to be, rather than what ſhe was in reality. At length Miſs Montague's anſwer came from Mrs. Manſel, who was commiſſioned to deſire Mrs. Williams's niece might be inſtantly engaged, and

and hold herſelf in readineſs to enter on her new employment the following Wedneſday, the day on which, with Lord and Lady Walton, ſhe ſhould be at Walton Park.

Edelfrida was overjoyed at the ſucceſs of her plan; but poor Mrs. Williams felt the moſt unfeigned diſtreſs. She was however ſilent on the ſubject, as it was now too late to expoſtulate, and ſhe had ſaid all ſhe could in vain already. Mr. Evans congratulated her; and every ſervant in the houſe, who admired her, and were greatly pleaſed with her good-nature and civility, were happy to hear ſhe was to continue amongſt them; for, conſidering her as Mrs. Williams's niece, they thought Miſs Montague's place one of ſuch honour and profit, that any one of them would have been happy to have poſſeſſed qualifications to obtain it. Edelfrida therefore would have been an object of envy at Walton Park, if ſhe had not been too well liked to render them jealous

lous of her good fortune. She herſelf found it neceſſary to baniſh reflection, in order to extract comfort from the view before her. "Farewell," ſighed ſhe, "for ever farewell, to all thoſe long-che-"riſhed hopes of happineſs the faith-"leſs Henry firſt taught me! Well, hard "as the taſk may prove, I will try to be "content." Wedneſday came; and her ſpirits underwent a painful ſtruggle with her reſolution; but ſhe determined not to yield, or let Mrs. Williams ſee the conflict. About ſeven in the even-ing the family arrived. From the win-dow in the houſe-keeper's room, Edel-frida ſaw her new miſtreſs alight from her carriage: ſhe attentively and an-xiouſly ſurveyed her countenance, as ſhe ſtopped to ſpeak to her own ſervant: ſweetneſs and affablility were written on it. Her perſon was tall and graceful; her mien engaging and unaffected; the tone of her voice, harmonious, and ex-preſſive of the amiable temper aſcribed

to

to her. Theſe obſervations revived Edelfrida; and ſhe waited for a ſummons to attend this lady, with impatience, yet not wholly unmixed with fear and anxiety; though theſe latter ſenſations were tempered with hope, and that hope was animated by the natural warmth of her own diſpoſition, which with avidity purſued new projects.

CHAR-

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

TEA was immediately ordered into the drawing-room; during which, Edelfrida was fortifying herſelf againſt ſhe was called for. At length the expected mandate was delivered to her by Miſs Montague's footman, who looked aſtoniſhed when he beheld Edelfrida, whoſe appearance ſo little anſwered the general deſcription of waiting-maids: ſhe, as yet unuſed to her condition, received this meſſage with an air of dignified reſerve, though with civility; and while ſhe obeyed its order to attend her lady in the drawing-room, the footman returned to the ſervants hall, all wonder and admiration, at the beauty and lady-like appearance of the new maid; the reſt of the ſervants flocked

round him, to praiſe her, and tell of her good qualities.

When ſhe reached the drawing-room door, her heart beat, ſhe trembled, and was irreſolute whether to proceed or not; but a ſervant coming out with the tea-tray, ſhe recalled her reſolution, and deſired him to acquaint Miſs Montague, ſhe waited her commands. When he delivered this meſſage, the door being half open, Edelfrida heard a voice, ſhe ſuppoſed to be Lord Walton's, ſay, "Is that "your new ſervant, Henrietta?" "Yes, "my Lord," replied Miſs Montague; "and a very awkward thing I feel it is, "to ſpeak to an utter ſtranger; but it "muſt be done; ſo, deſire ſhe will come "in, William." I'll leave you then," ſaid the ſame voice, "till you have ſettled "this important buſineſs." A gentleman then came out of the room; and ſeeing Edelfrida ſtanding not far from the door, he looked at her, as if ſurpriſed, and moving, paſſed on. "If Miſs

"Montague

" Montague feels awkward at the idea " of ſeeing and ſpeaking to me," ſaid Edelfrida to herſelf, " what muſt my " ſenſations be then!" At that inſtant the ſervant returned, and ſaid Miſs Montague was ready for her, ſhe might go in. She advanced ſlowly, and in a tremour, and preſently found herſelf in the room with two ladies, neither of whom, except as they got of their coach, ſhe had ever ſeen before. " I under- " ſtand," ſaid Miſs Montague, with great gentleneſs, " that you wiſh to en- " gage yourſelf to me as my maid."— " If you will have the goodneſs, Ma'am," replied Edelfrida, " to try me." The ſound of her voice, though now it expreſſed emotion, was yet at all times ſomuſical, that, as ſhe ſpoke, Miſs Montague looked at Lady Walton in aſtoniſhmen:. Edelfrida, obſerving the look, coloured ſtill more deeply. " I " can have no poſſible objection to " that," ſaid Miſs Montague, " if you

" do not think the ſituation beneath
" your acceptance; but indeed I can
" ſcarcely perſuade myſelf, that you
" were not intended for a ſuperior ſta-
" tion."—" No, Ma'am," returned Edelfrida reſpectfully, " I have no pre-
" tenſions, I have no wiſh, for a ſupe-
" rior ſtation; my utmoſt ambition is
" to render my ſervices worthy your
" approbation. I do not preſume to offer
" myſelf to you as at all qualified to
" be your attendant; but if you honour
" me with a trial, I hope in time to
" deſerve the favour.---" You know
" my terms," replied Miſs Montague, and you need be under no apprehenſion of my exacting from you any thing unreaſonable." Edelfrida curtſied. " But," continued her new miſtreſs, " if you
" think you are not ſufficiently conſi-
" dered, I will cheerfully make an ad-
" dition to the ſum propoſed; and I
" will as much as poſſible leſſen the
" number of thoſe things I might have

" expected

" from a common ſervant. " I am " truely grateful," ſaid Edelfrida with a graceful curteſy, " for this conſidera- " tion, Ma'am; but I am more than " ſatisfied with your liberality; and can " by no means wiſh to tax it higher, at " leaſt till I have done ſomething to " merit it." " I hope then," returned Miſs Montague, " that you will be as " well pleaſed with your place as I fore- " ſee I ſhall be with my maid. You " may now retire: I ſhall not want you " till bed-time."

Edelfrida again reſpectfully curtſied, and left the room, charmed with Miſs Montague. " Oh!" ſighed ſhe, " how " happy ſhould I have been in ſuch a " friend, in the days of my proſperity! " She who can ſo ſweetly ſoothe the " feelings of her inferiors, and render " ſervitude a bleſſing, how enlarged " muſt be her heart for friendſhip! " how copious its ſources of the moſt " refined pleaſures! The moſt conſo-

" latory kindneſs, the moſt generous be-
" nevolence! For once Fortune has
" beſtowed her favours with judgment,
" as well as liberality. Long, long
" may the amiable poſſeſſor live to
" enjoy them herſelf, and diſpenſe good
" to the thouſands who ſtand in need
" of her aſſiſtance!" Such were Edel-
frida's reflections, as ſhe returned back
to Mrs. Williams, who was impatiently
waiting to hear how ſhe had been re-
ceived; and when ſhe had heard, ſhe
exclaimed—" Well, I thank God, that
" ſince you would put yourſelf, my dear
" miſtreſs, into ſuch a ſituation, you
" have fallen into good hands." " No
" more repining, my dear Williams,"
cried Edelfrida with cheerfulneſs; " but
" come, introduce me to my ſiſter
" waiting-woman, Mrs. Manſel; and
" then you muſt aſſiſt Mrs. Lucy to
" arrange her miſtreſs's wardrobe in
" proper order." " Mrs. Manſel is
" in my Lady's room," replied Mrs.
Williams;

Williams; "ſo we'll go now, if you "pleaſe, to Miſs Montague's, to ſee all "things put right: but I muſt beg "you'll not take any unneceſſary trou-"ble; for the houſe-maids ſhall always "aſſiſt you." "I muſt," ſaid Edelfrida ſmiling, "begin by doing as I would "be done by; therefore I ſhall not "treſpaſs too much on my fellow-ſer-"vants." "Dear me!" cried Mrs. Williams, "how you talk, my ſweet "lady! They have been uſed from "their infancy to labour; and don't I too "well know how you have been otherwiſe "treated, till of late things have gone "wrong indeed?" "Don't recur to "paſt times," ſaid Edelfrida, "my "good friend; let us make the beſt of "our lot here, and not embitter pre-"ſent bleſſings by repining about thoſe "we have loſt." "Well," replied Mrs. Williams, "you ſurely are an "angel, to be ſo content under ſuch "heavy misfortunes; and I hope Heaven

"will

" will reward you for your patience." Edelfrida ſaid, " You would not com-" mend my patience much, had you " ſeen me on ſome former occaſions; " but come, a truce with this ſort of " converſation, and let us begin our " employment." They then went together to Miſs Montague's apartment; conſiſting of a dreſſing-room, bed-chamber, and powdering-room, with another adjoining for her maid, which Edelfrida was that night to take poſſeſſion of. Here they buſied themſelves in placing her clothes, out of her trunks, in the drawers and wardrobes; unpacking her boxes, and arranging every thing in exact order; which when completed, Edelfrida ſaid, " Don't you think I am very ex-" pert already, Williams? I ſhall " ſoon learn my buſineſs, I find; and " you will at laſt have ſome credit " in your neice, for having brought " her up ſo tidily." " My dear lady!" cried

cried Williams, reproachfully. " Not " a word more," replied Edelfrida, putting her hand on her mouth. They then returned to the houſekeeper's room; where they found Mrs. Manſel and Mr. Evans in cloſe converſation. Mrs. Williams, with rather an embarraſſed air and manner, ſaid to the former— " Mrs. Manſel, this is my niece, Miſs " Montague's new maid." Mrs. Manſel, a plain middle-aged woman, with- " out airs or impertinence, got up and " ſaid, " ſhe ſhould be glad to be " better acquainted with a young per- " ſon of whom Mr. Evans had juſt " been giving her a very favourable " account, as well as having written " to her to the ſame purpoſe." Edelfrida replied, " that ſhe was obliged to " her, and greatly ſo to Mr. Evans " for his kind partiality, hoping ſhe " ſhould always be grateful for it." " I am ſure you will, my pretty maid, ſaid he; " but tell me now how you

" like

" like your new lady, Miſs Montague."
" What I have yet ſeen of her," returned Edelfrida, " I muſt be difficult " indeed, not to like exceedingly; " ſhe appears to be a moſt amiable, " affable young lady." " She ap- " pears," replied he, " then, what ſhe " really is, the friend and patroneſs of " of the diſtreſſed, the moſt generous " and juſt diſtributer of a large in- " come, the kindeſt miſtreſs, and the " moſt reaſonable, ſenſible, conſiderate " young lady I ever heard of." " I " I muſt think myſelf fortunate then," ſaid ſhe, " in belonging to her." " In- " deed, I dare ſay you will," replied Mrs. Manſel; " for her laſt maid, who " lived with her from her infancy, and " married from her juſt before ſhe went " abroad, experienced the greateſt kind- " neſs and generoſity from her on " all occaſions, and loved her well " enough to have undertaken any thing " for her ſervice; ſhe would willingly

" have

" have gone abroad with her, fearing
" ſhe would be at a loſs for a ſervant
" ſhe had been ſo long accuſtomed to.
" Miſs Montague would not hear of it;
" but inſiſted on her keeping her en-
" gagement to be married at ſuch a
" time; making her a very handſome
" preſent to begin the world with, in
" addition to what ſhe had ſaved during
" all the years ſhe had been in her ſer-
" vice." All theſe accounts of Miſs Montague's goodneſs, ſerved to reconcile Edelfrida more and more to the plan ſhe had adopted of getting her own living in future. Indeed, her principles were too pure to ſuffer her to take advantage of poor Mrs. Williams's generoſity and grateful affection; and her pride was too potent to ſue, or even to accept from Sir Edward Dudley, had he been inclined to offer it her, any aſſiſtance, after the treatment ſhe had experienced from him. Maria, her dear and tenderly regretted Maria, was the only

only perſon on earth to whom ſhe could bear the idea of beng obliged; and from her ſhe had nothing to hope, in the preſent ſituation of affairs. With her deſtiny, then, ſhe determined to content herſelf. When the uſual hour of the family's retiring came, Edelfrida, following Mrs. Manſel's example, took her candle, and went into Miſs Montague's room, to be ready to wait upon her: ſhe wiſhed Mrs. Williams and Mr. Evans good night; they in return wiſhed her ſucceſs in her new office. Miſs Montague came into her room in a few minutes after Edelfrida had entered it, and looked exceedingly pleaſed to find every thing in ſuch nice order for her reception, and began aſking how long Edelfrida had been at Walton-Park; whether her health was improved, for Mr. Evans had mentioned that it was delicate; and put other queſtions to her, calculated to baniſh her evident timidity, rather than with an

intent

intent to gratify any unmeaning curioſity. It ſeemed more for form's ſake that Edelfrida waited upon her, for ſhe gave her very little trouble; undreſſing herſelf with quickneſs, being then in her habit. She informed Edelfrida what ſhe would wear in the morning, that it might be ready for her; named the hour ſhe choſe to be called at; then wiſhed her good night. Edelfrida retired to her own room, well pleaſed with herſelf for having performed ſo tolerably, and ſtill better pleaſed with her miſtreſs, who improved upon her every minute. She then ſat down, and prepared Miſs Montague's cap, gown, and linen for the next day; which done, ſhe got into bed herſelf, and, for the firſt time for many, many weeks, ſoon cloſed her eyes in a ſweet and peaceful ſleep. True, ſhe had ſlept heavily, from the effects of wearineſs, ſince her mind had been ſo haraſſed; but not till this night did ſhe enjoy the repoſe of tranquillity: yet

ſhe was far from happy in the aggregate; a tranſient calm had, however, ſoothed her ſorrows to reſt; and the beneficent Author of her exiſtence mercifully infuſed into the bitter cup of affliction he had deſtined her to drink, ingredients which ſoftened every quality the ſubtle draught poſſeſſed to poiſon the imperfect bliſs of poor humanity. The Power who ordained her to ſuffer, thus kindly and graciouſly blended, unſeen, comfort with his due corrections, nor, unpitying, curſed the creature whom his juſtice chaſtiſed.

END OF VOL. II.

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